The Fan Magazine for Golden Age and Silver Age Collectors

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 19
November 1992

ENEMY ACE STRIKES BACK!

A Look Behind the Lines
By Guy Budziak

PLUS:

THE WRATH OF THE CODE

Shocking but true!
By Rolf Gerdau

ROB & TIM'S EXCELLENT MARKET REPORT

SPORTS COMICS

The Complete Stats
By Michelle Nolan

©DC

EXTRA:
Dirt Cheap DC
By Tony Starks

$2.95 U.S.A. $3.50 Canada

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

Issue #20, November 1992

ON THE COVER:
An extreme close-up of D.C.'s anti-hero, Enemy Ace, from the cover of Showcase #58.
Joe Kubert's brilliant rendition of Von Hammer has become legendary and
DC war books drawn by the "dean of DC war" are highly prized by Silver Age collectors. ©DC

FEATURES

Behind Enemy Lines...With the Enemy Ace
Guy Budziak remembers DC's Silver Age "Hammer of Hell" **18**

Sports Comics
The Complete Statistics by Michelle Nolan **26**

Wrath of the Code
An Eyewitness Account by Rolf Gerdau **32**

Resume' of a Comic Book Legend
a career overview by Sid Jacobson **45**

COLUMNS

Adventures Into Weird Words
The Wonder of Wonder Comics by Pat Calboun **11**

Rob & Tim's Excellent Market Report
Marketplace tips by Rob Hues and Tim Riley **15**

Lost Comics of the '70's—Dirt Cheap DC
Tony Starks continues to unearth the uncommon buys **41**

CBM Forum
More Grading the Grading Guide by Mike Potter **47**

Fandom Flashbacks
The FIRST Action Comics #1 by Dr. Mark Miller **71**

DEPARTMENTS

Letter from the Editor **6**
Marketplace Mail **8**
Coming Next Issue **12**
Advertiser's Index **67**
Advertising Information **67**
Big Little Ads **68**
Back Issue Department **75**

The COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE is published by Comic Book Marketplace Inc., all rights reserved under International and Pan-American copyright conventions. The information in this publication is protected under U.S. copyright law. Absolutely no part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, mechanically, photographically, or electronically, without prior written consent from the publisher. Inquiries (including advertising) and letters to the editor should be addressed to: *The COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE*, P.O. Box 180900, Coronado, CA 92178-0900 or call (619) 435-6645. 19 issue subscription rate: $19.95, First Class Sub. (mailed in an envelope) $36, Canadian: $36, in US funds, Overseas: $60 in US funds. All articles are the express opinion of the individual contributing artists and authors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of *The COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE*, its staff, or its advertisers. All Comic Book characters, names, logos, trademarks, and symbols depicted and described in research and fan articles are owned and copyrighted by the individual companies. Advertising and Subscription rates may change without notice. Printed in the USA.

Issue Number 19, November 1992

ABOVE: STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES #138, ILLUSTRATION LEFT: An original interpretation of the Ace by the Author in woodcut.
Character copyright D.C.

somber German soul who is subject to bouts of melancholy.

Midway through the introductory tale, Enemy Ace succeeds in acquiring his 51st victory, yet not without personal cost. Grazed by gunfire, it is while he recuperates that we witness his loneliness, the alienation he feels in the company of others. While out game hunting, he encounters his one true "friend", a solitary wolf, the only living creature he truly identifies with, and one who reappears periodically throughout the series.

By story's end, Von Hammer has failed to protect a German zeppelin which is destroyed when a doomed French flyer dives into it, kamikaze-style. But the Baron salutes the determination and self-sacrifice of the doomed French pilot nonetheless.

Our Army At War #151 was the first of only five Enemy Ace stories to appear in 1965. He would not return until 1968, when the "Hammer of Hell" resurfaced in *Star Spangled War Stories*.

As to why his appearances were so few and far between, one can only speculate. Could be that the chill wind that blew through Von Hammer's soul put off some readers, those who were more accustomed to the hard-bitten guts-and-glory heroics of Sgt. Rock and Easy Company. Unlike the Sarge, the Enemy Ace had no camaraderie and only bitter glory. Just one very lone man pondering his role in the grim game of war. His later stories were published in the late 60's, at a time when our

country was wrestling with its own conscience over war. Perhaps the editors at DC may have been concerned that the introspective themes of Enemy Ace stories may have struck a chord a little too close to home. And then of course he was, after all, an enemy — a hated son of "Der Fatherland", albeit four wars ago.

COVER TO STAR SPANGLED WAR STORIES #144
Pictured below the cover is a close-up of the art credits as they appear on the "mystery sticker" (see page 23). ©D.C.

All told, Enemy Ace appeared in only eighteen issues from 1965 to 1970, in stories that spanned three titles: *Our Army At War, Showcase*, and of course *Star Spangled War Stories*. What gives these issues special distinction from any that came after is the incredible art of the masterful Joe Kubert.

Kubert (along with the venerable Russ Heath) is revered by collectors as the foremost illustrator of DC war comics during the Silver Age, and though he is perhaps best remembered for his work on Sgt. Rock, I doubt whether anyone could have expressed the drama and splendor of Robert Kanigher's Enemy Ace stories as well as he did. His expressionistic use of color, his boldly dramatic handling of shadow and light, his rugged yet highly charged delineatory style, and his nearly cinematic approach toward perspective and composition... all these elements contribute to some of the most memorable work the comics medium has ever seen.

Kubert, in past interviews, has stated that much research went into making sure that these stories were as historically accurate as possible. He also made clear that, at the same time, storytelling was his main concern. Kubert brought the combination of fact and fiction to a high art and conveyed an almost supernatural reality to the pages. — especially those pages inhabited by the vividly drawn and memorable character, Hangman (Von Hammer's definitive nemesis).

When Enemy Ace returned in 1968, the Hangman was introduced in the first comeback issue, *Star Spangled War Stories* #138. A darkly fantastic character, his features, hidden beneath a black hood which was held in place by a noose, made the Hangman appear both villainous and noble, tragic and formidable.

Disfigured when his plane crashes after an encounter with "the Hammer of Hell", the Hangman is a figure of mythic dimension, in the tradition of such legendary creations as the Phantom of the Opera and Marvel's Doctor Doom! Born Count Andre de Sevigne, the Hangman is a French aviator who vows eternal vengeance against the German Ace responsible for his pitiable appearance.

Von Hammer's first encounter with the Hangman was a saga that spanned three issues (*SSWS* #138-#140). The final installment of this great comic book trilogy depicts Enemy Ace as a prisoner of war behind French lines, and a reluctant guest of the Hangman and his sister Denise. On the disfigured French flyers estate, he recovers from injuries sustained in battle. Count de Sevigne is portrayed as a gentleman by nature, except when airborne. Then he becomes a "killing machine" not unlike Von Hammer himself. These are tremendously effective elements of the intriguing storyline and they continue to be a regular topic of discussion among DC war collectors all over the country.

It was in *Star Spangled War Stories* #145 that the Hangman made his last appearance. This truly outstanding issue contains some of the most exceptional and compelling work ever done by Joe Kubert. From the cover, where the Baron's fallen form is shown guarded by his "brother" (the wolf), to the splash page, where Von Hammer dreams of battle with the Hangman astride mythical beasts, this issue sports absolutely remarkable work! Considering just the wonderful and artistic elements on pages 2, 3, and 13, this issue is a must for any and all admirers of Kubert's work. (How I envy anyone who might own the original artwork of these classic pages!)

What follows next is a title-by-title synopsis of those books that comprise the Kubert/Kanigher Enemy Ace catalogue...

Our Army At War #151, #153, and #155:

These were the stories that set the tone, establishing the character and his milieu. For the W.W.I flying enthusiast, there are a number of well-choreographed aerial dogfights, quite effective in conveying suspense and dramatic tension. But it is the human drama that is most memorable, such as the awe and apprehension the young flyers feel in the presence of the esteemed Rittmeister Von Hammer, or the annoyance Von Hammer expresses as his servant gushes over the Baron's victo-

ry cups. And, as with most all his tales, there is a sense of irony present, sometimes subtle, but often bitter and acute.

Showcase #57 and #58:

After three initial appearances as a backup feature, Enemy Ace is finally given full feature status with two full-length stories. These two *Showcase* issues also mark the 1st and 2nd times he is given cover feature status. Even in black and white reproduction, these covers are genuine classics. #57 first shows him as an apparition against a jet-black sky, while two planes locked in combat fly before him, his own tri-winged Fokker in pursuit of the other, as yet a third is shown falling in a plume of violet smoke and flame. *Showcase* #58, on the other hand, depicts a gunner in the foreground falling victim to Von Hammer's lethal gunfire, seen against a sky of blazing yellow, further enhanced by a bold red logo.

In issue #57 the Baron faces his first worthy opponent, a Canadian ace known only as the Hunter. Confident, formidable, almost always shown with a subtle smile across his lips, he distinguishes himself by flying without helmet or goggles, his hair a close-cut crop of red curls. In the end it is one-on-one, Von Hammer versus the Hunter, as the rest of their squadrons withdraw. In his second Showcase appearance he faces, less memorably, a French ace known as the "One-Eyed Cat". At one point in this story the Baron stands alone in the forest, rifle in hand, waiting for his companion the wolf to appear. After the animal arrives a scream is heard, and Von Hammer discovers an attractive young woman, slightly disabled after being thrown from her horse. The Baron lifts her, and while being carried to her home she steals a kiss from him, only to find that his "lips—are as cold—as death!" Unfortunately, it seems that Von Hammer himself also suffered the kiss of death, as Enemy Ace disappeared from sight, the apparent victim of low sales, and wouldn't be seen again until three years later.

Star Spangled War Stories #138-#150:

The Hammer of Hell returns, this time for an extended run, and what a glorious run it is. Splendid art, vivid storytelling, memorable characters... comics don't get much better than this. As previously mentioned, the new series begins with the introduction of the Hangman. Interestingly enough, the Hangman graced the cover of a comic book only once, on *Star Spangled War Stories* #140. Here Von Hammer is shown unconscious, his body almost totally submerged in water as the Hangman drags him to shore. His sister Denise is seen in the background imploring her brother to let the German die, since he is responsible for the Hangman's disfigurement. This is a great piece of work, where half the cover is framed in a border of red, and a night-black sky is shown beyond a skewed horizon, all three figures bathed in the glow of a bonfire. Denise later goes on to appear in issue #142 as the Harpy, where she herself takes to the skies to avenge her brother's misfortune. Most all these later stories took the form of morality tales, where mankind's actions are taken to task, or exposed and examined as questionable. Take for example "The Devil's General" in issue #143, where the Baron locks horns with Von Kleit, a Prussian general whose son yearns to be a member of Von Hammer's jagdstaffel, or flying squadron. Von Hammer tries to explain to the General that his son is too young and inexperienced, but he persists, and young Werner joins him on his next flying mission. Of course the young novice is downed, presumed dead, and in a fit of retribution Von Kleit sends the Baron and his squadron on suicide missions, hoping to exact revenge for the loss of his son. As it turns out the young man is not dead but imprisoned, and Enemy Ace embarks on a solo mission, intent on freeing him. He eventually succeeds in doing so, but upon returning he admonishes Von Kleit for allowing the murder of other young pilots (by sending them on suicide missions) for the sake of personal revenge. As a side note, Von Hammer creates something he calls a "collapsible umbrella" in this issue. In fact, Kanigher has just attributed the invention

DC
SGT. ROCK'S EASY CO.
Our ARMY at WAR
12¢
SGT. ROCK FIGHTS A LOSING BATTLE TO SAVE SOMETHING WHICH ISN'T WORTH A PLUGGED NICKEL IN EASY CO'S LATEST...
WHO IS THE BLAZING ENEMY WE DARED NOT SHOW ON THE COVER?
WHO? WHO?

ABOVE:
Showcase #57
BELOW:
Our Army At War #151 ©D.C.

of the parachute to Von Hammer.

Issue #150 of *Star Spangled War Stories* contains the final story of Enemy Ace done by Kubert and Kanigher, and one could sense even then that something was amiss, when for the last few stories the pages were fewer and reprint material was being used for backup features. So for some the late 60's were perhaps the twilight of the Silver Age, but a few books were still casting a brilliant glow even toward the end. Whether you're a fan of war comics or just a fan of comics in general, these are books that should not be overlooked. They're war comics, yet they're something else too. Something else indeed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Our Army At War:

151 (Feb 1965) "Enemy Ace", 15 page story.
153 (Apr 1965) "Flaming Bait", 14 page story.
155 (Jun 1965) "Fokker Fury", 10 page story.

Showcase:

57 (Jul-Aug 1965) "Killer of the Skies", cvr/ 24 page story.
58 (Sep-Oct 1965) "The Hunters-and the Hunted", cover and 24 page story.

Star Spangled War Stories:

138 (Apr-May 1968) "The Slayers and the Slain", cover and 23 page story.
139 (Jun-Jul 1968) "Death Whispers... Death Screams", cover and 23 page story.
140 (Aug-Sep 1968) "The Face of the Hangman", cover and 23 page story.
141 (Oct-Nov. 1968) "The Bull", cover and 23 page story.
142 (Dec-Jan 1968-69) "Vengeance is a Harpy", cover and 23 page story.
143 (Feb-Mar 1969) "The Devil's General", cover and 22 page story.
144 (Apr-May 1969) "Death Takes No Holiday", cover and 23 page story, with artwork by Joe Kubert and Neal Adams.
145 (Jun-Jul 1969) "The Return of the Hangman", cover and 23 page story.
146 (Aug-Sep 1969) Reprints two DC war stories, the first drawn by Russ Heath, the second by Ross Andru; both have 1 page of Kubert's Enemy Ace as lead-in. Cover by Joe Kubert.
147 (Oct-Nov 1969) "A Grave in the Sky", cover and 23 page story.
148 (Dec-Jan 1969-70) "Luck is a Puppy Named Schatzi", cover and 19 page story.
149 (Feb-Mar 1970) "Reach for the Heavens", cover and 15 page story.
150 (Apr-May 1970) "3 Graves to Home", cover and 14 page story.

ALSO OF NOTE:

Detective Comics #404

Batman and Enemy Ace square off in the wild blue yonder? Well, yes and no. A German actor who purports to be a descendant of Von Hammer and is a dead ringer for him decides to face our Caped Crusader in the sky rather than gun him down in cold blood. The story is pretty much a murder mystery a la Columbo, but one still has to appreciate that Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams did this one as a tribute to "the great Joe Kubert and Robert Kanigher".

Star Spangled War Stories #181, #182, and #183

Another fabled encounter, this time between Enemy Ace and the Balloon Buster. Illustrated in a Kubert-like style by Frank Thorne and written by Kanigher, Steve Savage is the

quintessential American, right down to his cowboy boots, and his specialty is shooting up dirigibles, in case you haven't guessed. He becomes Von Hammer's prisoner of war, but manages to escape, only to suffer defeat at the hands of Von Hammer in the sky. We last see him in a French hospital, swathed mummy-like in bandages, swearing vengeance against the German ace.

Men of War #8-#10

Enemy Ace appeared in various issues of this particular title including 8-10 in which his origins are very briefly touched on. These origins are in the form of memorable events from his childhood—such as a fencing duel he had with his father after which his father philosophizes that "when men ignore the rules of warfare, and kill the helpless like animals—they themselves become animals!" Although, his training and promotion are neglected in this trilogy, the flashbacks to his childhood provide interesting insights into his character in that they give some explanation for the thin line that Von Hammer walks between brutal murderer and ethical defender of his country.

The Last Kubert Enemy Ace:

Worth noting for completists are the last Kubert contributions to the Von Hammer legend. In 1976 D.C. published a superb five page story written and illustrated by Joe Kubert which saw print in the 200th issues of Star Spangled War Stories. Then in 1977 D.C. Special #26 had the honor of sporting an Enemy Ace cover by Kubert. This was the last original Kubert Enemy Ace to be published anywhere.

Enemy Ace: War Idyll:

DC released this splendid graphic war novel in late 1990, written and illustrated by artist George Pratt. As stated by Joe Kubert in the introduction, Von Hammer is "now an old man in the twilight of his life, (and) relives a time when his world was young and vibrant."

The Star Spangled War Stories #144 Sticker.mystery:

And finally, I would like to mention something peripheral yet intriguing, In the early 1970's DC released packets of stickers, each one showing the cover of a comic book. I still happen to have one showing Star Spangled War Stories #144, which shows Von Hammer hiding behind a tombstone as his antagonist tries to draw him out. However, two things on this sticker are different than on the cover actually published. One, that the logo is black instead of red, and two, it states on the sticker, "Special Issue! Story Illustrated by Alex Toth!", whereas on the cover actually published it states that in fact the illustration work is done by Joe Kubert and Neal Adams. If anyone knows the story behind this they should contact CBM and share it with us. Is there a long-lost Enemy Ace story with pencils or inks by Toth that has yet to see the light of day? Hmmm... As for the market viewpoint, it's no secret that these books have been consistently increasing, since most seem in relatively high demand by both Kubert collectors and DC war collectors. It's also worth noting that Von Hammer's first appearances in all three titles (Our Army At War #151, Showcase #57, and Star Spangled War Stories #138) have predominantly black covers, making them all the more difficult to locate in high grade!

So whether you're a war fan, a Kubert fan, a Kanigher fan, or just love Silver Age DC, "the Hammer From Hell" is worthy of your investigation. I hope you've enjoyed this short journey into one small corner of the incredible legacy of DC's War comics. ...Auf wiedersehn. ■

OPPOSITE:
Star Spangled W
Stories #145
ABOVE:
Star Spangled W
Stories #143
BELOW:
Star Spangled W
Stories #139
"Closer...closer
the Hangman
tightens his no
around the Ene
Ace!" ©D.C.

HOMERUNS, BASKETS, & TOUCHDOWNS

By Michelle Nolan

The best bargain in nostalgia collecting today might be old sports comics. All 124 of them.

But don't get the idea that those first 15 years of sports comics (1940-54) would be easy to amass simply because there are relatively few or because they are generally inexpensive. Some of them are, without a doubt, among the toughest comics to find. But the effort is worth it and it's a lot of fun too.

Take my word for it; they are, indeed, tough and fun. It has taken me more than ten years of active searching to collect 74 of them (and, so far, I've even had to settle for coverless copy of Jackie Robinson No. 6). It will no doubt take considerably longer to finish collecting the remaining 25 or so issues of the 50-issue run of "True Sport Picture Stories" (1940-49) by Street and Smith.

Because of the sports collecting boom in recent years, sports comics are much more expensive and sought-after than they had been for a couple of decades. But they give you more for your money than most sports collectibles, and, in many cases, they are probably scarcer than most other sports items.

The accompanying chart lists all of the fact-based sports comics, along with a shorter list of the pure fictional sports comics. It doesn't include titles such as "Real Life," "True" and "Real Fact," which frequently contained sports features, nor does it include non-sports comics with baseball cover themes. (I'm presently working on an index of both types for a future issue of Comic Book Marketplace.)

One of the pleasures of collecting sports comics is that you might find them outside the usual convention milieu. I was lucky enough to complete my collection of the 18 Fawcett sports comics a couple of years back when I stumbled upon a copy of the Phil Rizzuto one-shot in good condition at a baseball card dealer's table. Surprisingly, the dealer was asking only $6 even though the rare item was easily worth about $20 at the time. The last issue of "Sports Stars" (the #1 from Parents Magazine, 1946) that I needed to complete my basic run, I found on the wall among a bunch of Silver Age comics at an obscure comic book store in Salem, Oregon. It, too, was in good condition and priced at something like $12. I nearly fell over in shock!

If you are not a "completest", you still can have the fun of building a representative collection, or of sticking to comics with stories about your favorite sport or players, or other such possibilities like including issues of possible interest to collectors of African American memorabilia.

Even if you pay full Price Guide value, most sports comics are available from $5 to $30 in good condition. In my experience, near-mint sports comics are almost non-existent, probably because they may have had a higher "pass-on-to-another-reader" ratio among young readers than many other comics.

The best sports comics (and probably those in the most demand) seem to be the 18 Fawcett issues published from 1949-52, all with great photo covers. The stories are well

drawn, with art by Ed Ashe and Clem Weisbecker among others, and even well written. Most are even reasonably faithful to the true stories of their subjects. Some of them, in fact, are surprisingly blunt about the difficulties their subjects faced, although, of course, they all have "happy endings."

Two of them were devoted to heavyweight champion Joe Louis (don't pass these up); the other 16 were baseball issues, including the six Jackie Robinson comics. Seven other stars were profiled, but perhaps the most collectible of the series are the 1952 issues profiling the New York Yankees, New York Giants and the Baseball Hall of Fame (which then was only 13 years old). These also seem to be the scarcest.

Timely-Marvel-Atlas published a highly collectible 14 issue series from 1949-52 called "Sports Action" (only the #1 was called "Sports Stars"). The last five issues were all fiction, with the usual stable of good Atlas artists. The first nine issues are an intriguing mix of fact and fiction, with an emphasis on athletes who were great in their day but who aren't well-known today (such as Phillies relief pitcher Jim Konstanty). Their scarcity is on a par with other Atlas titles of the early 1950s. Getting a few is doubtable, but getting them all takes a bit of time and patience.

The best issues of True Sport Picture Stories were the first four, when the title was known simply as "Sport Comics" (1940-41). I doubt if more than 100 to 200 copies of any of these first four 64-page beauties still exist. The rest of the run of "True Sport Picture Stories" had some nice art by Bob Powell along the way, as well as some bizarre and hyped-up stories. In general, I judge these comics mediocre at best and, in my opinion, most may actually be somewhat overpriced. This is possibly because they were published by (and associated with) Street and Smith, the company that published The Shadow and Doc Savage pulps and comics, along with thousands of other magazines.

Harvey's title, "Babe Ruth Sports", ran for 11 issues. Ironically (or maybe deliberately), the first issue appeared in 1949, hitting the stands only about six months after Babe Ruth died. They were part of Harvey's fascinating evolution from a company that concentrated on super hero comics in the 1940s to one that dealt primarily in younger children's entertainment by the mid to late 1950s (along with a few romance titles). I've always felt that these, too, may fall into the somewhat overpriced category. In spite of the fact that the title contained the magic words "Babe Ruth", the issues are actually filled with mostly short items, and even Bob Powell's art isn't enough to rescue the stories from the uninteresting.

Eastern (Famous Funnies) published only one sports comic, but it is truly a beauty! The 1954 "Amazing Willie Mays" is definitely a must-have item (and it's about my all-time personal favorite player, to boot!). It gives Willie's life story through the first part of the 1954 season. For sports trivia buffs, that's the year he returned from two years of Army duty and began to fulfill his remarkable potential. This is probably the most expensive sports comic, but it's worth it. It is also likely the best issue for investors.

LEFT:
Sports Action #2 (Feb 195
BELOW:
Sport Stars #1 (Nov 1949)
(Sport Stars became Sports
Action with issue number 5
©MCG

RUGGED TALES OF DANGER AND RED-HOT ACTION!
SPORTS ACTION
THE NEXT SECOND WOULD TELL WHETHER KEN ROPER WOULD STAY IN THE BIG LEAGUE—OR BE TRADED BACK TO THE MINORS! DON'T MISS THIS REAL-LIFE CHRONICLE OF HOW IT FEELS TO BE A
ROOKIE!!
ATLAS

Magazine Enterprises (ME) published another such noteworthy one-shot, the 1949 "Pride of the Yankees." I suspect this may have been tied in with a re-release of the 1942 movie of the same name, starring Gary Cooper and Teresa Wright. Many consider this film to be the best of the "old-time" baseball movies (I sure do). "Pride of the Yankees" is a worthwhile addition to any comic collection and is written by Gardner Fox (of DC sci fi fame) and illustrated by Ogden Whitney (noted ACG artist). ME also published a 1953 one-shot called "Home Run," which featured Stan Musial on the cover. This is an underrated baseball and comic collectible! It contains stories about the Cardinals and even the early history of Little League Baseball.

Ziff-Davis published eight sports comics, the best of which were three issues of "Baseball Thrills." They are worthwhile, but I suggest that you don't over pay to get them (around the $5 to $15 range, depending on condition). Issue #3 has a nice Joe DiMaggio story. A scarce sports comic (especially in grade) is the 100-page, square bound, issue of "Bill Stern's Sports Book" dated Winter 1952-53. This one is a real must for basketball collectors.

Fans of Will Eisner will insist on owning a copy of "Baseball Comics," the 1949 one-shot from his short-lived publishing company. Kitchen Sink recently reprinted it, so you can best read the issue before you "sink" $30 or more into an original. Eisner also drew the cover for the "Baltimore Colts", a 1950 one-shot published by American Visuals. Some collectors and historians suggest that it was a giveaway, but it should be noted that it has a 25 cent cover price.

Hillman's seven-issue title had three different names, "Real Sports," "All Sports", and "All-Time Sports" yet none of them were very inspiring. As in the Atlas titles, the emphasis was on lesser-known athletes and sports, so don't strain your budget for these. I'd have to say the same about the five-issue series from

Factual Newsstand Sports Comics
1940-1970

STREET AND SMITH (50)
Sport Comics: #1 (1940), #2 (Mar 1941), #3 (Aug 1941), #4 (Nov 1941).
True Sport Picture Stories (from Sport Comics): V1#5 (Feb 1942) through V1#12 (Apr 1943). V2#1 (Jun 1943) through V2#12 (Apr 1945). V3 #1 (Jun 1945) through V3#12 (Apr 1947). V4#1 (Jun 1947) through V4#12 (Apr 1949). V5#1 (Jun 1949), V5#2 (Aug 1949).

FAWCETT (18)
Jackie Robinson: #1 (1949), #2 (Jul 1950), #3 (Sep 1950), #4 (Nov 1950), #5 (1951), #6 (1952).
Joe Louis: #1 (Sep 1950), #2 (Nov 1950).
Ralph Kiner: one-shot (1950).
Don Newcombe: one-shot (1950).
Roy Campanella: one-shot (1950).
Larry Doby: one-shot (1950).
Yogi Berra: one-shot (1951).
Phil Rizzuto: one-shot (1951).
Eddie Stanky: one-shot (1951).
Thrilling True Story of the Baseball Giants: one-shot (1952).
Thrilling True Story of the Baseball Yankees: one-shot (1952).
Baseball Heroes: one-shot (1952, Hall of Fame story).

MARVEL-ATLAS (14)
Sports Stars: #1 (Nov 1949).
Sports Action (continued from Sports Stars): #2 (Feb 1950), #3 (Jun 1950), #4 (Oct 1950), #5 (Jan 1951), #6 (March 1951), #7 (May 1951), #8 (Aug 1951), #9 (Oct 1951), #10 (Jan 1952), #11 (Mar 1952), #12 (May 1952), #13 (Jul 1952), #14 (Sep 1952).
Note: #10 through #14 are anthology fiction issues.

HARVEY COMICS (11)
Babe Ruth Sports: #1 (Apr 1949) through #11 (Feb 1951).

ZIFF-DAVIS (8)
Baseball Thrills: #10 (really #1, Sum 1951), #2 (Late Sum 1951), #3 (Sum 1952).
Football Thrills: #1 (Fall-Wint 1951), #2 (Fall 1952)
Bill Stern's Sports Book: #10 (really #1, Spr-Sum 1951), #2 (Sum 1952), #3 (Wint 1952, 100-page giant issue).

HILLMAN (7)
Real Sports: #1 (Oct-Nov 1949).
All Sports (continued from Real Sports): #2 (Dec 1948 Jan 1949), #3 (Feb-Mar 1949).
All Time Sports: #4 (Apr-May 1949) through #7 (Oct-Nov 1949).

STAR COMICS (5)
Sport Thrills: #11 (really #1, continued from Dick Cole #10, Nov 1950), #12 (Mar

Star Comics, entitled "Sports Thrills." A four-issue run from Parents Magazine in 1946, "Sports Stars," is mostly reprints (I think) from True Comics and the like. They're half-comic, half-text, and scarce. But I find them to be inevitably overpriced. Let the buyer beware here, for sure.

The 1954 Willie Mays comic is, as far as I know, the last fact-based newsstand sports comic of the early period. It wasn't until Charlton Comics came out with a surprisingly well-done 25 cents one shot giant about the NFL in the winter of 1969-70, that another fact-based general-circulation sports comic was published. Just try to find this issue which is entitled "Charlton Sports Library." It's truly tough to locate, but it's worth the hunt. It's the 124th issue on the list of sports comics.

If you're interested in sports comics, I'd suggest that you thoroughly examine any given issue before buying it. My experience has been that it is a lot better to spend $35 on an excellent issue of "Ralph Kiner, Home Run King" from Fawcett, than for you to sink $10 or $15 into some of the less notable mediocre issues.

Numerous independent sports comics have been published in the past few years, ranging from pretty good (the Mickey Mantle issue drawn by Joe Sinnott) to awful (almost anything done by Revolutionary). The few issues of these current comics I have sampled have been replete with numerous factual and spelling errors, and the art usually isn't very good. In fact I've been really appalled by most of them. Revolutionary's Nolan Ryan issue had at least a half dozen, easy to spot, basic factual errors. I was so offended that I politely requested and received my money back! After exposure to much of the older material I must regrettably report that I've found the vast majority of the new books to be lacking. But give 'em a look and see what you think.

Whether your collector's eye leads you to the old sports comics or the new, this wonderful genre contains some scarce, entertaining, poignant, and down right historical comic books. Thanks for reading and happy collecting! ■

OPPOSITE PAGE:
Sports Action #14 (Sept., 1942) ©WCG
ABOVE:
Sport Stars #3 (Jun-July 1946)
©Parents Magazine

1951), #13 (May 1951), #14 (Aug 1951), #15 (Nov 1951).

PARENTS MAGAZINE (4)
Sports Stars: #1 (Feb-Mar 1946) through #4 (Aug-Sep 1946).

STANDARD (2)
Mel Allen Sports Comics: #5 (really #1, Nov 1949), #6 (Jun 1950).

MAGAZINE ENTERPRISES (2)
Pride of the Yankees: one-shot (1949, Lou Gehrig's life story).
Home Run : #3 (A-1 #89, but really a 1953 one-shot).

EASTERN (1)
Amazing Willie Mays: 1954 one-shot.

EISNER (1)
Baseball Comics: one-shot (Spr 1949, #2 announced but never published).

ESSENKAY PUBLICATIONS (1)
Smash Hit Sports Comics: one-shot (Jan 1949).

AMERICAN VISUALS (1)
Baltimore Colts: one-shot (1950, 25 cents cover price, but also seems to have been a giveaway).

CHARLTON (1)
Charlton Sports Library, Professional Football: one-shot (Wint 1970, 25 cent giant).

Fictional Sports Comics
1940-1970

Iron Vic: (Dell, Single Series #22, 1940, may not have a sports theme).
Comics Revue: #3 (St. John, 1947, featuring Iron Vic) I have no proof of the existence of Iron Vic #2 and #3 from St. John and they may not exist).
Ozark Ike: (Dell Four Color #180, 1948).
Ozark Ike (Standard Comics #11 1948 through #25 1952).
Dick Cole: (Novelty, #1-19-49 through #10-19-50).
Swat Malone: (Swat Malone Enterprises, 1955 one-shot).
Frank Merriwell at Yale: (Charlton #1, 1955 through #4, 1956).
Cotton Woods: (Dell, Four Color #837, Sep 1957).
Gil Thorp: (1963 Dell one-shot)
Strange Sports Stories (DC's Brave and the Bold #45 through #49, 1963).
All-American Sports: (1967 Charlton one-shot featuring Chat Cheffield of Rockridge High). ■

"I Witnessed the Wrath of

For collectors of Gold and Silver Age comics, the infamous "Code" of 1954 was the result and cause of a lot of change in the history of American comic books. But what did the Code do to individual comics in particular?

WAR of the GOBLINS!
JIM - WE'RE TRAPPED! WE'LL BE BURNED ALIVE!
HERE'S A STORY AN AMATEUR WRITER SUBMITTED TO US - AND WE'RE NOT ASHAMED TO SAY THAT IT'S A FAIRY STORY PURE AND SIMPLE! BUT IN THIS DAY OF PURE SCIENCE AND MECHANIZED CIVILIZATION IT'S FUN TO VENTURE INTO THE WORLD OF SHEER FANTASY! SO HERE IT IS - THIS CHALLENGING TALE OF STRANGE NON EXISTENT CREATURES -- A STORY WE'LL CALL --
The TINY WAR!
I - I MUST BE DREAMING, JIM! I SEEM TO HEAR LITTLE PIPING VOICES

While going through my collection of ACG (American Comics Group) comics, I came across something of interest which gives some insight into the changes wrought by the Code.

The ACG had a habit of reprinting stories throughout its history. This was especially true in its sister titles 'Adventures Into the Unknown' and 'Forbidden Worlds'. Usually the stories were given a new name and recolored, but otherwise unchanged.

For example, the cover story of Forbidden Worlds #55 (Jun 1957) "Immortal Diana" was reprinted in Adventures Into the Unknown #151 (Sep. 1964) under the new title "The Man Who Met a Goddess". A story in Forbidden Worlds #98 (Sep 1961) entitled "Down, Down, Down" was reprinted in Adventures Into the Unknown #159 (Sep. 1965) as "A Dive To the Depths".

(This story has a personal interest for me because Forbidden Worlds #98 was the first comic I ever read. I was seven years old and the fond memories I had for this comic prompted me to collect ACGs as an adult.)

But the reason I find ACG's habit of reprinting early stories of interest relates to the introduction of the Comics Code Authority in 1954.

Looking through my collection, I discovered two stories that were originally published in Pre-code issues and then reprinted (in revised form) in Post-code (approved) issues. An examination of these two stories reveals how the Code actually changed things in specific ways, even in the rather "tame" horror stories published by ACG.

The first story comes from Forbidden Worlds #20 (Aug, 1953) and was reprinted two years later in Forbidden Worlds #35 (Aug. 1955), the first Post-code issue. The original story was entitled "War of the Goblins". The story begins with Jim (a forest ranger) and his lady companion discovering that unexplained forest fires are breaking out in the area while, at the same time, streams in the area are mysteriously drying up.

They suddenly stumble onto a battle in progress between evil green water goblins and flesh colored forest goblins. The flesh colored goblins are the good guys and, as an aside, explain to Jim that they are also what "we" call leprechauns. After they repel their green skinned enemies (with Jim's assistance), they tell him that this battle is one in a long series of confrontations.

No! It can't be! It's impossible!

Welcome to the 19th issue of CBM. Like the quote above from nearly every pre code Marvel, 19 issues does seem almost "impossible". Especially when you consider the fact that, historically, most comic book fanzines have a habit of becoming extinct after the first 2 or 3 issues. I am often asked "how CBM started?" and "how do we keep going, month after month?"

I think the story of CBM's "survival" past those first few issues can be attributed to an interesting combination of timing, naivete, enthusiasm for the hobby, and, most importantly, friendships (both old and new).

The aspect of timing is a whole essay in itself, but needless to say, in late 1990 there seemed to be a missing piece in the fandom publications puzzle, i.e. nothing that primarily focused on Golden Age and Silver Age comics.

So that's where the naivete comes in. I offhandedly remarked to Lisa "Why don't we publish a fanzine, how hard could it be?" Whew... now that's naive!

Being an enthusiastic collector (and a card carrying optimist) helped greatly in ignoring small roadblocks, like not knowing anything about publishing, having little to publish, and oh yea, no money. Enthusiasm is definitely what gets you past these "minor" barriers. Common sense does not.

And then comes the single contributing element that makes CBM such an absolute pleasure. As collectors, we not only acquire books over the years, we also accumulate acquaintances and friends with each transaction. So I began asking my friends and fellow collectors from all over the country to write about those aspects of our hobby that were the most meaningful and interesting to them. Somehow the idea really caught fire, because articles (accompanied by massive amounts of support and encouragement) began rolling in. To all the "oldtimers" that I knew before the magazine began and who jumped in to help right from the beginning, you will always have my sincerest gratitude. And to the many hundreds of new collector friends that have made contact because of CBM, I thank you also for your confidence and encouragement.

So there you have it. The amazing story of a magazine that relies totally on intangibles for monthly fuel. Oh, to be sure, there are headaches. On occasion you may hear a few late night, near deadline, laments about CBM also reminiscent of pre-hero Marvel. "AIIEE! It is accursed! It will destroy us!". But like all good Kirby Monsters, the danger eventually passes, and another issue of the Comic Book Marketplace is finally put to bed. If you find your way back to this page next issue, look faintly between the lines. You might read "No! It can't be! It's Impossible! CBM #20 already?"

Happy Collecting!

Gary

Gary M. Carter

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Gary M.Carter

DESIGN DIRECTOR & BUSINESS MANAGER
Lisa M.Carter

CONSULTING ART DIRECTOR
Joe Sikoryak

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Michael Naiman

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Eva Diller • Betty McChesney
Mick Rabin

COMPUTER CONSULTANT
Mark Ynrralde

DESIGN ASSOCIATES
Jody Sims • Michelle Humphrey

MAGAZINE CONSULTANT
Bill Howard

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Erik Andresen • Jon Berk
William Bernhardt • Guy Budziak
Pat S. Calhoun • Steve Carey • Susan Cicconi
Bill Cole • J. Keith Contarino • Larry Curcio
Duane Dimock • Shel Dorf • Steve Duin
Alan Dulfon • Joe Dungan • Craig Fiscal
Christopher Forbes • Tom French • Jeff Gelb
Rich Halegua • Bruce Hamilton • John Hauser
Lee Hester • Bill Howard • Rob Hughes
Pat Kochanek • Steve Kortus • Michael Lynn
Sean Linkenback • Dan Malan
Duncan McAlpine • Michael Naiman
Bob Nastasi • Michelle Nolan • Bob Overstreet
Nelson Patterson • Jim Payette • Don Phelps
Mike Potter • Joe Ramone • Todd Reznik •
Tim Riley • Charlie Roberts • Robert Rotar
Michael Sanchez • Steve Sibra • John Snyder
Tony Starks • John Townsend
Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr. • Ted Vanhiew
Gerard Voland • David Welch • Mark Wilson
Jerry Waist • Gregory Wazio • Nicky Wright

. . . the CODE !"

A Shocking But True Account By Rolf Gerdau

The forest fires are caused by the vile water dwelling goblins and the good forest dwelling goblins dry up the streams in retaliation.

The good goblins give Jim, and the woman 'ARUM', a plant that allows humans to see the creatures. However, this plant is also poisonous to the water goblins. After a couple of close escapes from a forest fire and an evil goblin attack, Jim uses ARUM candy bars (!) to drive the green water goblins from the [illegible]

The changes wrought by the Code are apparent at the very start of the story. On the splash page, we first notice the change in the introduction. After describing the mysterious forest fires and the drying of the streams, the introduction suggests these acts "may be the work of tiny people from the world of the occult." In the reprint, the author makes it a point to 'prevent' verisimilitude (a suspension of disbelief), by describing the following story as a "fairy story, pure and simple". Lest we think we're reading Newsweek, he goes on to write, "In this day of pure science and mechanized civilization, it's fun to venture into the world of sheer fantasy" with a "challenging tale of strange non-existent creatures".

The top half of the splash *(figure 1, left)* contains a few changes. The lady's words are changed from the offensive, "Jim —we'll be burned alive!", to the post-code tranquillity of, "I must be dreaming. I seem to hear little piping voices." To emphasize the aura of innocence, the flames and smoke of the original panel have been eliminated.

The captions of the two panels below the splash, have a one word change. The "tragedy" of the forest fires remains but the "tragedy" of the streams drying up has been lessened to "trouble."

We can already conclude that in the post-code comic world the 'occult' is out; burning alive is out; and "tragedy" is okay in reference to forest fires but offensive when related to dry streams!

On the second page, first panel, Jim's reference to superstition and evil spirits is changed to "strange things" and amazingly, he uses the term "Burned" in the revised story only.

The second panel of the original is leading to real trouble. Jim doesn't suspect the supernatural (whew!), but he does suspect "an escaped lunatic . . . out to destroy Ridgeville!" (good heavens!!!). In the revised story, he has no idea what's causing the fires and dry streams, but he does admit "Ridgeville's in a bad way" (once you eliminate the supernatural and escaped lunatics it leaves rather slim pickin's for plot development.)

The rest of the page illustrates the battle between the leprechauns (flesh colored goblins) and the evil water goblins (colored green in the original - flesh colored in the revised).

There are changes in the caption to panel 4 *(figure 2, below)*. The editor must now assure us that "our writer was imaginative".

In the battle panels, all the spears are inked out or redrawn as swords. This is perhaps done in deference to the 'injury to eye' motif, which was frowned upon by the Code. The following phrases are revised. "Hated ones" is changed to "our enemy", and "Attack . . . and show no mercy!" is changed to "Hurl them back".

WE OUTNUMBER THE HATED ONES ATTACK -AND SHOW NO MERCY!
RALLY TO ME BRAVE SUBJECTS WE FIGHT TO THE DEATH!
WHY THEY'RE ONLY TWO FEET TALL!
FAN-TASTIC!
WE OUTNUMBER OUR ENEMY! HURL THEM BACK!
RALLY TO ME BRAVE SUBJECTS THEY MUSN'T DEFEAT US!
WHY THEY'RE ONLY TWO FEET TALL!
FAN-TASTIC!

On page three, the first change occurs in panel three. The phrase "Creatures of the occult world" is changed to the less threatening, "such little creatures as we". In panel five, the forest goblin leader explains that the evil water goblins "burned" their forest homes. But their forest homes are merely "destroyed" in the revised story.

On page four, panel two, the lady yells, "Forest fire" as flames encroach a few feet from her. In the revised version, the flames are eliminated and the lady states that she "smells smoke".

In the third panel, the sinister caption that reads - "a wave of

THE WATER GOBLINS
THEY ARE HELPLESS IN THE WATER! GET THEM AND LET YOUR VENGEANCE BE SWIFT!
I'M DROWNING!
TOO MANY OF THEM CAN'T FIGHT BACK!
HA HA! DIE FOOLS!
THE WATER GOBLINS
LOOK THE MORTALS WHO CAUSED OUR DEFEAT
THE WATER IS NOT THEIR NATURAL HABITAT THINK OF THE GLORY IF WE COULD CAPTURE FULL SIZE PEOPLE!
OH JIM
THEY THEY MAY BE SMALL BUT THEY'RE AT HOME IN THE WATER AND THEY'RE TOO MANY FOR US!

goblins attack, yelling "Ha! Ha! Die fools!". It seems obvious that Pre-code goblins had as little desire for "glory" as did escaped lunatics.

But our "full-sized" humans are saved in the next panel when the water is tainted by the "Arum sprigs" they were carrying. In the original panel Arum is poisonous to the "choking . . . fiendish creatures". In the revised panel, it is "terribly repellent" to the "small wicked creatures". The page ends with a reference to "life and death" removed, and the adjective "deadly" changed to "hated".

Page six has only a couple of changes. In the first panel, Jim, once again on dry land and looking at the smoldering forest, worries if the good forest goblins "are still alive". In the revised version, he hopes that they "came through safely".

As the plan to eliminate the evil goblins is formulated (on the rest of the page), no further changes are made. In the revised story the reader can safely assume that the evil ones will be repelled rather than poisoned.

On the final page of the story, the plan is put into action with only the fourth panel changed *(see figure 4, below)*. It shows the evil water goblins climbing from the 'candy bar' treated water. In the original panel the caption describes a "vile exodus", but the revision calls it a "mad exodus". The Pre-code goblin exclaims, "Argh! Somebody poisoned the water! We can no longer inhabit it!" The revised goblin states, "Urf! Arum in the water . . . and my tribe just can't stand Arum." It would seem fitting that a "durn it!" be added to this second statement but perhaps the writer was creatively fatigued after coming up with "Urf!".

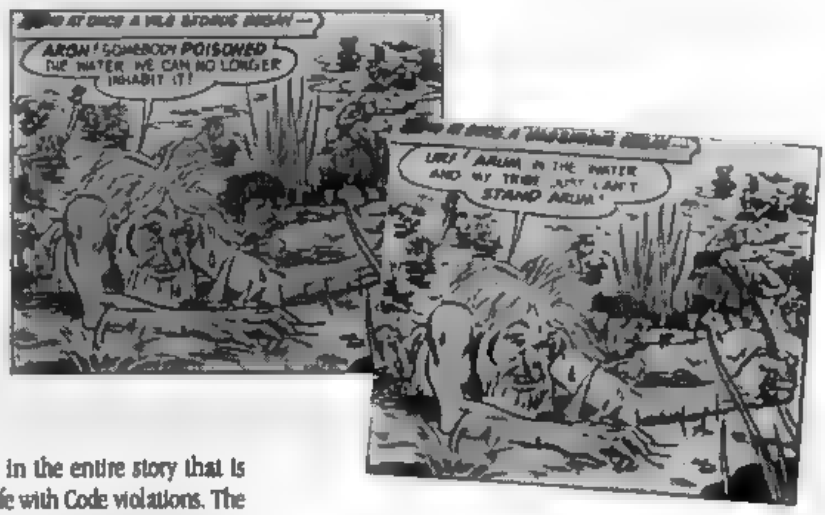
Ridgeville was saved, as was the moral fiber and mental health of the readers!

terror swept over them", is eliminated entirely, but the flames are left in.

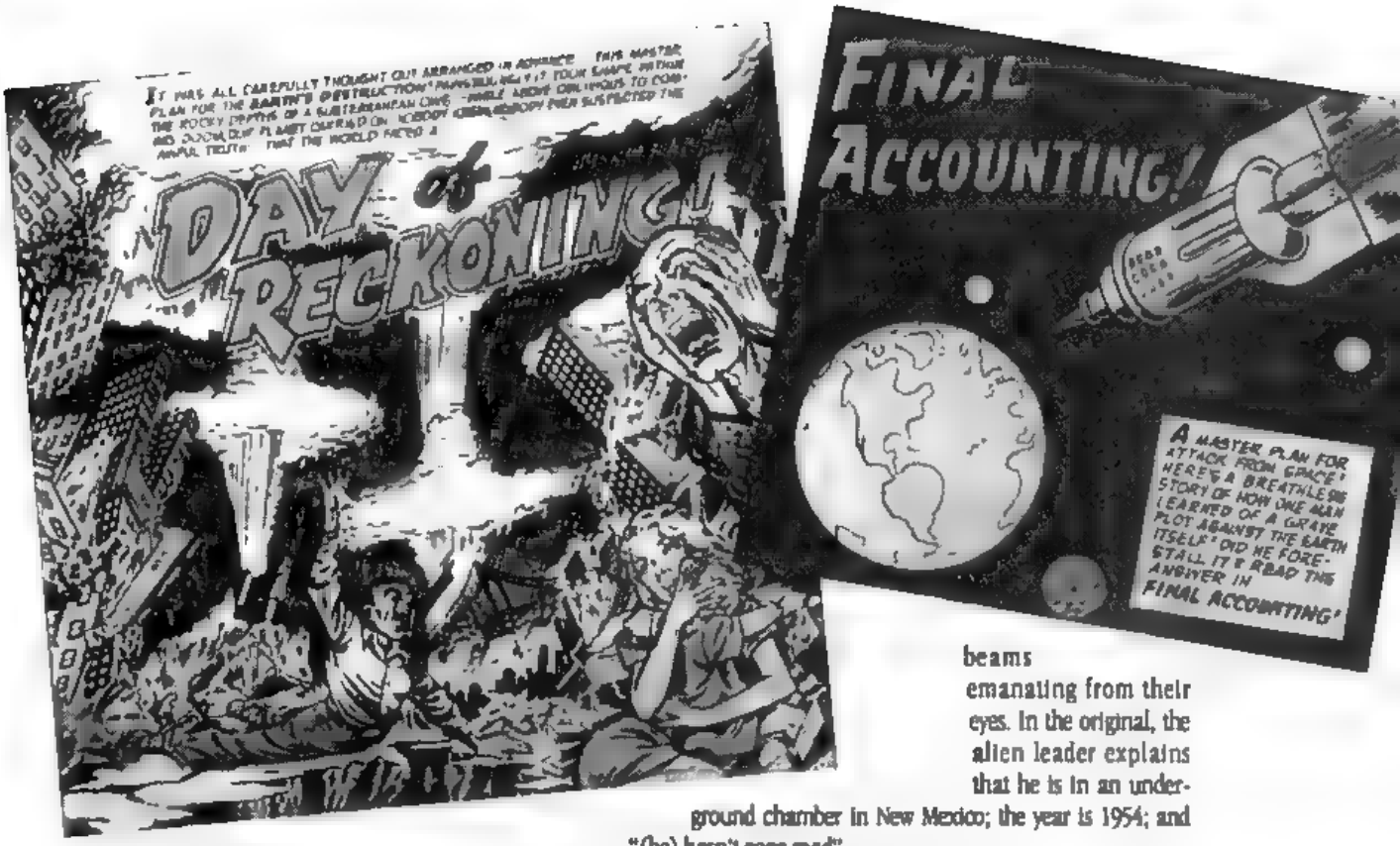
The final panel, on this page, has the heroine's words changed from "Jim . . . I'm afraid", to "Hurry, Jim". There seems to be no tolerance in the Code for frightened heroines, nor patience for slow heroes!

Page five begins with a change in the caption of the first panel. "Raging flames" is changed to "Circling flames". *(figure 3, above.)*

These flames force Jim and the lady to take refuge in the water. The second panel in the original, shows an angry green water goblin threatening "swift vengeance" on the "helpless" humans. In the revised panel, he, instead, reminds his comrades of the "glory" they would receive "if we could capture full-sized people!". (We can't fault them for being a little over anxious in their climb up the status ladder, seeing how they are so aware of their 'less' than full stature!). By changing his color from green to flesh, he is no longer a vengeful occult creature, but rather a mischievous fantasy person (though not full-sized).



The third panel is the only one in the entire story that is completely redone. The original is rife with Code violations. The heroine, with "mounting horror," is shown drowning. The "helpless" hero, being outnumbered, can't fight back as the evil


DAY of RECKONING!
FINAL ACCOUNTING!
A MASTER PLAN FOR ATTACK FROM SPACE! HERE'S A BREATHLESS STORY OF HOW ONE MAN LEARNED OF A GRAVE PLOT AGAINST THE EARTH ITSELF! AND HE FORESTALL IT! READ THIS ANSWER IN FINAL ACCOUNTING!

The second story I want to examine was originally published as the cover story in Forbidden Worlds #34 (Oct/Nov. 1954) and reprinted (only nine months later!) in Adventures Into the Unknown #65 (Aug. 1955)

The original story opens with a half page splash guaranteed to ruffle the feathers of the Comics Code Authority *(figure 5, above)*. "Day of Reckoning" is superimposed on a gruesome scene of nuclear devastation, complete with doomed and dying men, women, and children - a classic end of the world panel. In the reprint we see a much calmer scene, with a less ominous title - "Final Accounting" (obviously the Code inspector had never been audited by the IRS or this revised title would have been perceived as truly horrifying).

On page two, our hero (a uranium prospector) investigates the site where a strange glowing object fell the night before. He enters a mysterious cave that made "his blood run cold". He observes strange alien creatures at work. They notice him and with a blinding flash, subdue him just as he is saying "I've got to notify the... Oh-hh!".

He fared better in the Code edition. His blood remained warm, but he was "seized by stark amazement". The aliens still discover him, but the blinding flash is inked out and the hero defiantly states, "They've seen me! I've got to brazen it out!"

The first two panels of page three include some interesting changes. The hero is rendered unconscious, and is at the mercy of three strange creatures, who pin him to the ground with force beams emanating from their eyes. In the original, the alien leader explains that he is in an underground chamber in New Mexico; the year is 1954; and "(he) hasn't gone mad".

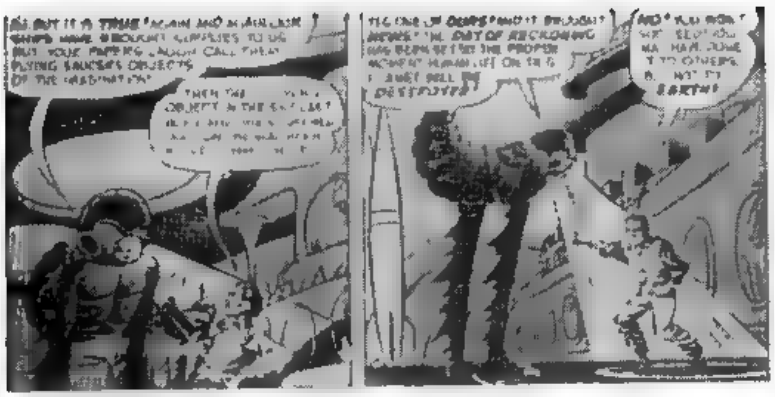
In the revised story, he's not in the force beams at all, but calls down from an overhead tunnel, saying, "I'm coming down! I want to find out what goes on here!" The alien leader pretty much says, "okay" without mentioning New Mexico, 1954, or the hero's mental state (nor rendering him helpless with force beams).

The alien leader, in both versions, explains that they are a war-like race bent on conquering other worlds and Earth was next in line. In a flashback to the alien's homeworld, however, the Code flexes its talons. The alien leader is being given instructions before his journey to Earth - "This planet is somewhat primitive, but ideally situated for our purposes". Back in present time, the alien tells the hero that Earth is to be an arsenal, but "not before your kind of life has been destroyed!" The hero protests and earns another jolt from the force beams.

In the revised story, there is a peculiar change. In the flashback panel, the instructions are changed to "Remember . . . we do not plan an immediate invasion. Yours will be merely a scouting trip". The present time panel has the alien leader telling that Earth is to be an arsenal, but "we plan to take over the Earth by surprise assault within twenty years!" The force beam is colored out, so the hero is not penalized for his protest.

Page four begins with the alien leader tormenting our hero with the news that the strange light he had seen the night before was a ship bringing the date of the exact "day of reckoning", when all human life will be destroyed. They then give him another good jolt of force beam, just for the heck of it, blasting

continued on page 38



continued from page 35

him into unconsciousness.

In the revised version, the alien leader explains that the ship brought news that the attack would be on "July 1st, 1975." Then, being Code approved aliens, they do not blast the hero. The entire panel is redrawn to have him discovered unconscious in the desert, by another prospector *(figure 6, above)*.

The rest of the story is unchanged except for the complete replacement of the second to the last panel. In the original, the aliens are shown stockpiling missiles, and anxiously awaiting the day that they will destroy all human life on Earth.

In the revised story we, instead, have a picture of planet Earth awaiting attack from space. We assume the alien "scouting mission" has returned to their home world, and are not fiendishly going about their evil preparations right under our feet.

The story ends, in both versions, with the hero having amnesia, struggling years later to remember something he knows he should not have forgotten - the date of the "Day of Reckoning."

We can interpret these changes a number of ways. In response to the examples I've described, I suppose the usual reaction might be "big deal", especially when compared to some of the more gruesome stories put out by other publishers at that time (or when compared to the explicit violence of some modern comics). It appears that the publishers became picayune about compliance with the Code, and bent over backwards to avoid even the suggestion of being harmful.

I've never seen a copy of the Code, and I don't know exactly what the restrictions were. I can only assume that the changes in these stories reflect those restrictions.

The changes also reveal, however, the gratuitous use of possibly offensive words, ideas, and scenes for no real reason whatsoever (a tendency common in all media and, apparently, in all times).

I was surprised and amused by some of the changes I found in these stories. I hope the same is true for you. ■

Subscribe to CBM by phone!

(619) 435-6645

12 issues for just $19.95

MasterCard VISA

Dirt Cheap DC

by TONY STARKS

Back in the July 1992 issue of CBM (#15) I listed what I felt were some excellent 1970s Marvel comics "best buys". CBM was immediately deluged with letters from DC fans to publish a similar list for their favorite company, so... here it is.

To reiterate what was said in the previous installment, comic book collectors have always placed a great deal of importance on #1 and first appearance issues. It's no secret that these issues may appreciate considerably when a series or character eventually becomes popular, and fandom has witnessed many examples of just such price increases.

As you read this installment of "Lost Comics of the 70's", looking at some "dirt cheap" DC issues, please consider the following. First, the quality of the books listed here vary considerably, some quite good, some fair, and others, well..., but all are CHEAP! And all are $15 or less with some as low as $1!. Second, I've marked recommended issues with an asterix (*) and highly recommended issues with a double asterix (**). And third, whether you are primarily an investor or collector, the nice thing about inexpensive comics is that they are both low risk and affordable to all. So let's look at some Dirt Cheap DC.

All-Star Comics #58 ** (1-2/76, $1 25) 1st issue since 1951, 1st Powergirl

All-Star Comics #69 * (11-12/77, $1 25) 1st Huntress.

All-Star Western #1 (8-9/70, $6)

All-Star Western #2 (10-11/70, $3 50) 1st El Diablo.

Army at War #1 (10-11/78, $1).

Batman Family #1 (9-10/75, $5)

Beowulf #1 (4/5/75, $1 50).

Black Lightning #1 (4/77, $2).

Blitzkrieg #1 (1-2/76, $1 50).

Claw the Unconquered #1 (5-6/75, $2).

Dark Mansion of Forbidden Love #1 (9-10/71, $1 50).

DC Comics Presents #1 (7-8/78, $1.50).

DC Special Series #1 (9/77, $3).

DC Super Stars #1(3/76, $3 50).

Detective Comics #437 ** (10-11/73, $12) The new Manhunter with Simonson art.

Demon #1 ** (8-9/72, $13) Kirby art.

Doorway To Nightmare #1 (1-2/78, $1)

Firestorm #1 * (3/78, $3).

First Issue Special #1-7, 9-13 * (4/75 - 4/76, $2) Plenty of bargains here!

First Issue Special #8 ** (11/75, $15) 1st Warlord.

Freedom Fighters #1 (3-4/76, $1 20).

Ghosts #1 (9-10/71, $6) 112 issue run.

Hercules Unbound #1 (10-11/75, $1 20).

Isis #1 (10-11/76, $1 50)

Jonah Hex #1 ** (3-4/77, $12) 100+ issue run.

Justice Inc. #1 (5-6/75, $1 25) McWilliams art.

Karate Kid #1 (3-4/76 $2).

Kobra #1 (2-3/76, $1.50)

Kong the Untamed #1 (6-7/75, $1 50).

Korak, Son of Tarzan #46 * (5-6/72, $1 50) 1st DC issue.

Legion of Super-Heroes #1 * (2/73, $8)

Man Bat #1 * (12-1/75-76, $4 50).

Men of War #1 (8/77, $2)

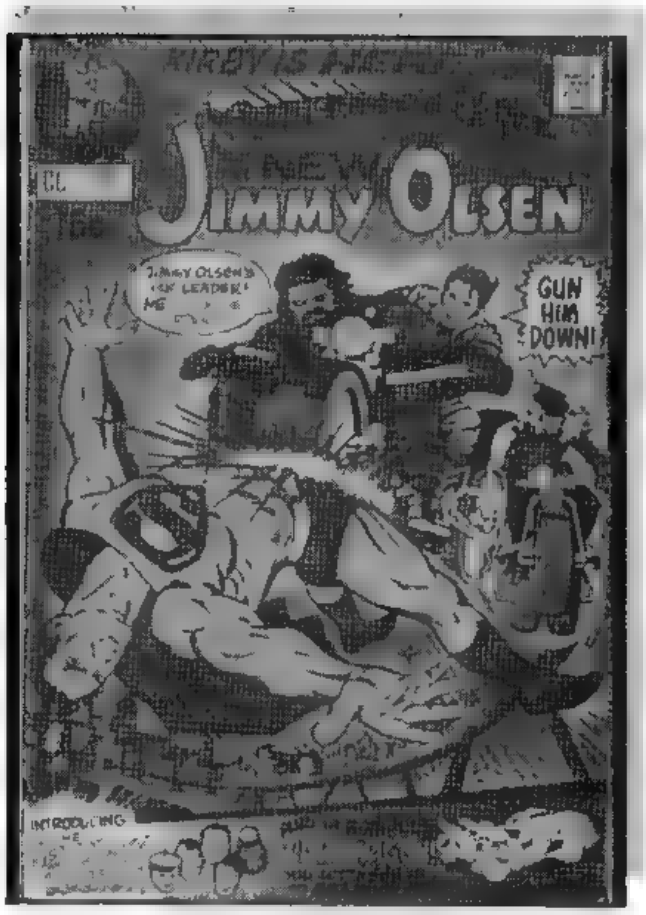
Mister Miracle #1 ** (3/71, $14) Kirby art.

Omac #1 * (9-10/74, $5)

Plop #1 (9-10/73, $3.50) early Sergio Aragones art.

Ragman #1 * (8-9/76, $3).

Richard Dragon, Kung Fu Fighter #1 * (4-5/75, $1).



Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen #133 ©DC

Rima, The Jungle Girl #1 (4-5/74, $3).
The Sandman #1 ** (winter/74, $6) Kirby art.
Secret Society of Super-Villains #1 * (5-6/76, $1.50).
Secrets of Haunted House #1 (4-5/75, $1.20)
Shade, The Changing Man #1 (6-7/77, $3.50) Ditko art.
Shazam! #1 (2/73, $2)
Sherlock Holmes #1 * (9-10/75, $1.50)
Showcase #94 * (8-9/77, $5) New Doom Patrol.
Stalker #1 * (6-7/75, $2.50) Ditko/Wood art.
Starfire #1 (8-9/76, $1.50).
Star Hunters #1 (10-11/75, $1).
Steel, the Indestructible Man #1 (3/78, $1.20).
Strange Sports Stories #1 (9-10/73, $6).
Superboy #197 * (9/73, $5) Legion begins.
Super Friends #1 (11/76, $1.50).
Supergirl #1 (11/72, $2). *
Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen #133 ** (10/70, $4.50). 1st Silver Age Newsboy Legion, Kirby art.
Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen #134 (12/70, $5) 1st Darkseid, Kirby art.
Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen #135 (1/71, $3) new Guardian, Kirby art.
Sword of Sorcery #1 * (2-3/73, $2) Great art in this title!
Tales of Ghost Castle #1 (5-6/75, $1).
Tarzan #207 ** (4/72, $5) 1st DC issue, incredible Joe. Kubert art!
Three Mouseketeers #1 (5-6/70, $5) rather scarce DC funny animal title.
Time Warp #1 (10-11/79, $1).
Tor #1 (5-6/75, $1).
Weird Worlds #1 * (8-9/72, $3) Superb Edgar Rice Burrough's characters, stories, and art.
Welcome Back Kotter #1 (11/76, $1.50) TV show

I have, no doubt, left out some deserving comics, but this list will provide a good starting point the next time you visit your local comic book convention. It would be interesting to compare the appreciation of these books against a Silver Age key of comparable price (say Daredevil #1 or Avengers #4) over the next 3-5 years. I believe some of the books listed above could easily out perform many of the silver keys. I wish you good luck and happy collecting. ■

ORIGINAL COMIC ART WANTED

GRAPHIC COLLECTIBLES is looking to purchase, **AT TOP PRICES**, art by the Artists listed below.

We have been in the business of buying and selling Originals for 15 years. Call us FIRST or LAST to get the best price for your Originals. We will also trade for the items we want as well as sell your originals for you.

ART ADAMS
NEAL ADAMS
MURPHY ANDERSON
C.C. BECK
WAYNE BORING
JACK BURNLEY
JOHN BUSCEMA
JOHN BYRNE
MILTON CANIFF
AL CAPP
RICHARD CORBEN
REED CRANDALL
JACK DAVIS
STEVE DITKO
WILL ELDER
WILL EISNER
SILVER AGE DC ART

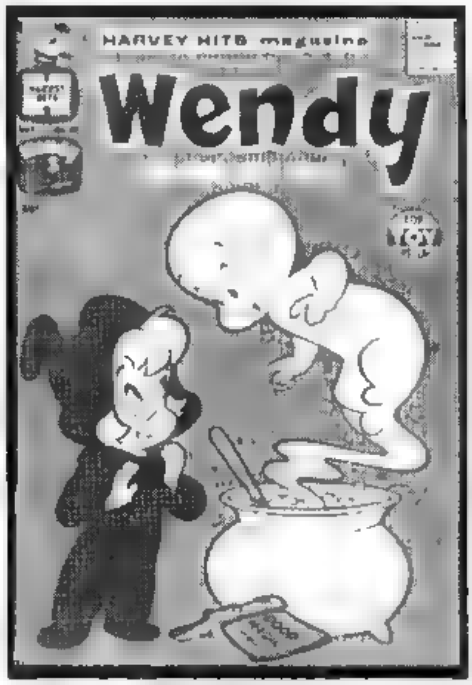
BILL EVERETT
LOU FINE
HAL FOSTER
MICHAEL GOLDEN
CHESTER GOULD
RUSS HEATH
BURNE HOGARTH
CARMINE INFANTINO
JEFF JONES
MIKE KALUTA
BOB KANE
GIL KANE
WALT KELLY
JACK KIRBY
JOE KUBERT
RUSS MANNING
SILVER AGE MARVEL ART

MORT MESKIN
SHELDON MOLDOFF
REUBEN MORIERA
MIKE PLOOG
MAC RABOY
ALEX RAYMOND
CHARLES SCHULZ
JOE SHUSTER
NOEL SICKLES
BARRY SMITH
DICK SPRANG
JIM STERANKO
CURT SWAN
AL WILLIAMSON
WALLY WOOD
BERNI WRIGHTSON
GOLDEN AGE ART

GRAPHIC COLLECTIBLES
Mitch Itkowitz
22 Blue Hills Dr., Saugerties, N.Y. 12477
(914) 246-0952
(914) 246-1025 FAX

Resume' of a comic book legend...

SID JACOBSON



I started at Harvey Comics in late 1952, soon out of college at NYU, as an assistant editor to Perry Antoshak, one of three editors of the firm at the time. The other two were Matt Murphy and Louise Hill. Within six months, Perry went into service and I took over his job.

The first books I edited were the horror and war line, working with such as Lee Elias, Al Avison, Warren Kremer, Bob Powell, Howard Nostrand, Simon and Kirby (on Captain 3D), Jack Sparling, Manny Stallman, et al. I did all the 3D books and Flip as well.

I soon took over the humor line when Matt Murphy left to go to Western Publishing. I then handled Casper, Audrey, Herman and Katnip, Buzzy, Baby Huey, Felix, Believe It or Not, and many others. Working with Steve Muffatti and Warren Kremer at that time, we created and developed the new Harvey characters. (By this time I was the only editor still employed by Harvey.) The characters we created were: Richie Rich, Little Lotta, Hot Stuff, Dot (based on an old character supposedly created by Alfred Harvey and drawn by Vic Herman), Stumbo, Spooky, Wendy, and each associated family of characters.

I worked at Harvey through 1984, basically as managing editor and later as a Vice President and a member of the Board of Directors. I was the editor of every Richie, Casper, Hot Stuff, Dot, Lotta, Audrey, Huey, Spooky, Felix, Wendy, Stumbo—and so many others—that Harvey published from 1953-1984.

When the company deteriorated as a firm, I went to Marvel Comics where I soon became an executive editor and created Star Comics, the young humor line, with Tom DeFalco, Warren Kremer and Lennie Herman, both from Harvey, worked with me there. Together we created Planet Terry, Top Dog, and Royal Roy, amongst others. Howie Post, Ernie Colon and Stan Kay—all from Harvey—worked with us, too. Some of the other characters I worked on at Marvel were: Alf, Muppet Babies, Heathcliff, Strawberry Shortcake, Care Bears, Mad Balls, Count Duckula, The Ewoks, Damage Control, and Fraggle Rock. I also began the Barbie and Mighty Mouse projects.

In May, 1990, I was hired by Jeff Montgomery, the present owner of Harvey Comics, as editor in chief of the new Harvey company and came to Los Angeles, where I presently work and live.

In my own right, I was a lyricist and record producer in the pop music field during the '50s and '60s, and wrote a dozen hit songs and had more than 150 songs recorded by many, many major artists. Some of my major hits were: "At the End of a Rainbow" (Earl Grant), "Warm" (Johnny Mathis), "A Boy Without a Girl" (Frankie Avalon), "Don't Pity Me" (Dion and the Belmonts), "Yogi" (Ivy Three), "30 Days Hath September" (Robert Goulet), and "Wonderful You" (Jimmy Rodgers)

Three novels of mine have also been published. "Streets of Gold," published in 1986 by Pocket Books, was selected as the best new paperback novel of the week by Publishers Weekly. "Another Time," published by St. Martin's Press in 1990, also received excellent reviews. A comedy mystery, "Dirty Son of a Witch," was published by Lancer Books in the 1970's. I've also written two books of comic humor: "The Black Comic Book," with Ernie Colon, published by Price Stern Sloan; and "Captain Israel," with Stan Kay, published by Lancer Books.

I've written, too, for several animation series, including Felix the Cat and Johnny Cypher in Dimension Zero, both for Oriolo Studios. ■

BY SID JACOBSON

More GRADING THE GRADING GUIDE

A small time dealer/collector's perspective

Dr. Kochanek's recent discussion of the new Grading Guide last issue, made several excellent points. Before adding my thoughts to his, I'd like to mention my perspective is that of a small time dealer/collector with a small budget. Consequently, I'm a bit more interested in how the Guide handles the low end of the preservation scale.

First I'll make a few remarks about the points he raised, then raise a few of my own, and in the process make some suggestions for the next edition.

I completely agree the Grading Guide is long overdue. If you could see me I'd give you guys a standing ovation. We need a more precise language for communicating in our comic book transactions. Just as the speech of cavemen was inadequate to advance civilization, so is the old Overstreet system for advancing our hobby. Many of the arguments I've seen in the comic book trade have been over grading.

Most often the comment people make to me, positive or negative, about their experience with some mail order dealers is, "... he overgrades".

Photographs are really the only way to do it. The grading system as it's been is subjective. The only real way to learn something subjective is by experience or studying example after example. I was stunned with how thick the book was.

One problem with the Grading Guide is finding an example that matches the comic in one's hand. One solution is to objectify the system rather than work with a subjective one. More on that later.

CBM FORUM by Mike Potter

The glossary is excellent. We need the vocabulary. Often we don't want to look stupid and inexperienced so now we can look up terms in private. Also, it should reduce conflict.

I agree the OWL card reflects more shades of brown than white. I do use the small ruler to measure tears when preparing advertisements. Isn't what we really need a grading-guide-on-a-card for use at conventions or when we discover comics for sale?

I support Dr. Kochanek's suggestion to lower the grade for the premium price on key books. I don't think it should be lowered for non-keys (or one dealer's opinion of a key) even though they may be rarer. If there's no demand then the supply really doesn't matter in determining the price.

Lastly, I also enjoyed the articles on restoration but concur that other opinions should be represented. Personally, I don't see what is so wrong about restoration. When we preserve antiquities or paintings by the Old Masters, does it detract from our enjoyment? The real problem is non-disclosure of restoration at the time of the transaction. I agree an untouched original is desirable, but our disdain of restoration should be directed at unethical non disclosure.

"I don't see what's so wrong with restoration? The real problem is non-disclosure."

Now for a few observations from me and my peers. The 100 point system is good because it provides lots of room, but how does one differentiate between 77 and 76? The real problem is the authors know the deductions for defects, but didn't list them. At least it seems that way when you look at the defect section where the mechanics (this condition minus something for this defect yields a revised grade) is clear.

What everyone I've spoken with wants is a list of defects and how many points to deduct. A guide like this would have chapters on defects (printing, handling, etc.) rather than grades. Grades become the result of mathematics. This is what I meant when I referred earlier to objectifying the grading system. It is essentially the system Pacific Comic Exchange uses in their grading service, just simplified for anyone to use. Beauty is always a personal thing, but when money is involved, we want things to be crystal clear.

Why is page whiteness (OWL) handled separately? Sure it's a desirable trait of a comic, but so is completeness, lack of tears, ink reflectivity, etc. Should page whiteness affect values independently of these other characteristics? A VG comic with OWL 8 pages would be desirable over a standard (if there is such a thing) VG comic, but so would a GD comic where the only thing wrong is a coupon cut out. My point is page whiteness should be treated as a comment, not a grade in itself. On the other hand, if this system is the direction the hobby is heading, why not go all the way and describe books with an exterior (cover) rating and an interior (OWL, tears, completeness, coupons cut, etc.) rating?

On another point, a system can only be good if it's used. So our goal should be to help the Grading Guide become widely used. One way to do that is to get it in the hands of as many collectors and dealers as possible. From a marketing perspec-

tive, there seems to be two barriers to achieving this goal. The first is the price. We've got to get it down below $10, so the little guys can afford it easily. One source of help might be switching to an objective system because fewer pages would be needed to communicate the system. Also, real books aren't exclusively required. Just buy some cold "Hot" books and create the defects you want to illustrate. (As an aside, the inclusion of photographs of newer books will help sales to younger collectors) Also, why weren't the absence of marketing gimmicks like posters or "Tatooz" mentioned as defects? The second barrier is the shrink wrapping. No one can inspect the book to decide whether it's worth the price. Most folks say, "What can they possibly have to say about grading that takes so many pages?"

Finally, to explain a bit more about the grading-guide-on-a-card concept, consider this situation. You're at a convention confronted with a comic on your want list and you want to make sure it's above a certain grade. However, the place is crowded, people are pressuring you, so you've got to work fast. What you really need is a list of the cutoff points for grades based on defects.

In other words, you want to know what is the most severe defect of this comic book.

The remedy is a list of grades and the defects at that grade where the comic book will not qualify for a higher grade. I've given an example below. What I did was go through the Grading Guide and make note of when certain defects were first mentioned and assume that defect excluded the book from higher grades.

To interpret the list below, apply the following: "If this defect is present, the comic can be graded no higher than this grade". For example, a comic book has a nail hole, therefore it cannot be better than VG, and consequently you shouldn't pay more than x dollars. Most of the time the book will actually be one grade lower or more because of the accumulation of defects. Here's the list.

Poor: more than 1/3 front cover missing, lamination, paint or oil. Fair: unreadable, split spine, centerfold missing if readability is preserved, no ink reflectivity.

Good: detached cover, chunks missing, brittleness, coupon cut out that preserves readability. Very Good: centerfold detached, tape, subscription crease, water, glue, nail holes, trimming, Marvel chipping, rat chew, logo tracing. Fine: spine roll, replaced staple, reading crease, subscription label.

Very Fine: creasing, tears, dents, staining, cover detached at staple, stickers, obtrusive names and stamps, abraded corner.

Near Mint: several small bindery defects. Mint: corner color fleck, bindery corner, stress line, erased name, oxidation shadow, tiny ink date, double cover.

So now that you've read two opinions about the Grading Guide, I suggest that all serious hobbyists send in ideas about the Grading Guide and grading in general. Our hobby will benefit if everyone gets involved and contributes ideas and suggestions about what should be in the 2nd edition? ■

FANTASY ILLUSTRATED • FANTASY ILLUSTRATED • FANTASY ILLUSTRATED •

continued from page 9

uniform is laudable, I wonder whether grading is less than a "science", but an "art". Certainly an article or CBM Forum piece on the auction grading process/disagreements would be interesting (for instance, is there some book characteristics/defect that is "interpreted" differently by different experts?)

On a totally non-related issue, I don't understand why Century Of Comics is worth so much more than Funnies On Parade! I Understand some suggest that it is "rarer", but half of it is from FOP and its historical importance pales beside FOP.

And speaking of historical importance, 'splain to me, if you can, how Comic Magazine #1 and More Fun #14 have finally zoomed in value in recognition of their significance to the Superman mythos and New Fun #6 (arguably the most significant New Fun because it contains Siegel and Shuster's first published work) is the only New Fun to show NO increase in value. Collectors who are in tune with this pre-hero era know how key and desirable this book is. When was the last time you saw #6 for sale? It makes no sense! End of ranting .

Jon Berke, Connecticut

Nice to hear from you Jon, here are a few miscellaneous A-musings: (1) FF #2 survey is going strong, I hope CBM readers will participate in our CBM poll by sending in a simple Xerox copy of the cover. (2) Your grading variation comments and article suggestions are well taken. I feel Carter's corollary of grading still applies. "Different defects have a different esthetic impact on different collectors". If you accept my corollary, you may come to the conclusion that I have, namely that grading is an art. (3) I agree. The historical importance of COC pales beside FOP. (4) I also agree regarding New Fun #6, it makes no sense! End of raving…

Feedback from Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr.

Good talking to you in San Diego. And (I guess) thanks for the photo in CBM #18. I'm not so sure I really wanted to advertise my appearance so vividly - ain't getting old fun?

Nice to see data coming in from old friend Ray Storch (Hi, Ray). I don't have many of the Turoks, but I do have a copy of #8 which is by the artist I believe did most of the early issues. This guy also did Buffalo Bill, Jr. which is where I first encountered his "style." A lot of what this guy did appears to be a swipe, at least as far as I can tell. He especially "liked" Toth, Buscema, and Shores from 1949-1953. He also did several Movie adaptations for Dell. I doubt if we'll ever find out who he is/was without some inside source from Dell/Western.

Re: Alexander Hloderwski's letter. The early issues are not by Marsh. I think Manning was the most underrated and definitely the most under praised artist during his career. Check out the early Dale Evans Queen of the West issues for some of his earliest and, perhaps, most exciting work. But what connection did I miss between Turok and Russ Manning? Also, Alberto Giolitti and Adolfo Bullya are/were better known in this country than Mike Teitelbaum knew. I'll be happy to send samples of their work if it might help.

Re: Tim Hessee and Ditko. It is a predilection of all comic researchers to put absolute faith in cover dates, yet research has proven that they are only accurate plus or minus two months. Every publisher had his own schedule. As an example, shipping forms for Atlas comics prove that any given shipment from the printer could contain cover dates spanning three months (i.e. comics dated January or February or March were all contained in one shipment to distributors). So when other data surfaces (like Bruce Hamilton's claim that he wrote Ditko's first story and that it was in Fantastic Fears #5), we should be prepared to give it some credence. Therefore the guide's "1st Ditko story" does not imply a second story in the same issue, but is a substantiated claim to being Ditko's first professional work, even if it appeared after (per cover date) his work in Black Magic. I've been down this road several times and recommend other researchers not get too enamored with the absolute "sequence" of cover dates.

Re: Atlas and cover dates: Your reply to Bob Ford's letter was a bit confusing. Maybe I can help a bit. It isn't September, 1957 that was the missing month, it was October. Battle #54, Battleground #20, Dexter The Demon #7, Kid From Dodge City #2, Love Romances #71, Love Tales #75, Marines In Action #14, and many more were all dated September, 1957. For October, 1957, only Dippy Duck #1 has that cover date, but I have a recollection of someone telling me that one other book was published with that date, so I won't claim Dippy Duck is the only one. The reason that such a cover date exists goes back to my Tim Hessee reply - Atlas shipped a range of cover dates each week. I know this because I've seen the in-house lists of comics shipped from Marvel's own records. So, since Uncanny Tales #56 is dated September, there is no chance that a bimonthly title came out with another issue before the implosion. And since the number of titles after the crash was limited to 16 and all 16 are accounted for, the chances of #57 existing are zero, zip, and nil! I find one big problem with much of the published data and that is, that if errors are printed, many more people will see the original error than will ever encounter the correction. It's scary that one person somewhere, sometime in the distant past sent Overstreet the Uncanny Tales #57 data and no amount of published corrections seems to counter it.

John Hauser's article provided a much needed overview to pre-code Horror. I feel a few facts got a little mixed-up so I thought I might share some of the interesting insights I've discovered.

(1) Frazetta, Powell and Evans had each been working in comics for at least five years before doing a Horror story, so it's not completely accurate to say they were "just starting their careers."

(2) Neither Williamson nor Torres ever did a pre-code story for Atlas, so they really can't be included in the Atlas artist's lists.

(3) Wolverton did a total of eight stories for Aragon, Gillmor and Key, and they are, indeed, classics. But regretably his excellent work did nothing to elevate the rest of a rather mediocre line of comics. Reflected glory is not likely to impress a fan who shells out significant bucks for a non-Wolverton issue from these "4th string"

continued on page 52

Marvel medallion memories.

Just finished reading #18 and wanted to let you know that, yes, those Marvel medallions did exist and were distributed. I have memories (unfortunately, that's all!) of possessing a Conan medallion and wanting to trade with my friend for his Spider-Man. I seem to recall that they were much like a half dollar in size and weight, "printed" on both sides as well. I can't remember how I got one or what became of it however! But having read about them again, I do remember that I really liked the things and would love to have one again!

Ryan Castinado, California

A superior retrospective.

CBM just keeps getting better. Issue 17 contained two outstanding articles. "When the Bat Flew Alone" by Rob Hughes was a superior retrospective of the very early Batman. The early Batman is a mythic, nocturnal creature and a violent vigilante inhabiting a crime infested urban world. The large Bat-like ears give him a bizarre, almost surrealistic look, befitting the film noire atmosphere he exists in… and revels in. From what I have seen of the early dark avenger, the character would never again be so powerful, not even when given five decades. Superman is day. Batman is the night.

Mr. Hughes' exploration of the twelve pre-Robin comics is quite comprehensive. Each cover is featured and examined. The plot synopsis of each issue is impressive and compelling, the next best thing to reading the actual comic. And barring a Las Vegas jackpot or a lottery win, these are twelve issues I will never own.

"Chamber of Chills" provided a welcome look at the delightfully explicit pre-code horror comics. EC tends to eclipse everything in the field (understandably so), yet there are alternatives. Mr. Hauser did not mention that the genesis of the horror comic, Eerie #1 (Jan 1947, Avon), was allegedly the very first horror comic book.

Nearly four decades after the institution of the Comics Code, we comic lovers are perplexed, frustrated and saddened by the actions of Dr. Wertham. I believe his motives were essentially altruistic, but censorship at any level is unacceptable.

Tim Walters, Oklahoma

Your points are well taken. I'm hoping an informed collector will share his/her thoughts on Eerie #1 via an article in a future issue of CBM.

Another member of the "Burt-Cave" club.

I was awash in nostalgic memories as I read Gerard Voland's reminiscences of Burt Blum and Cherokee Book Store, for I also was a graduate of Burt's Academy of the Golden Age.

As a child, the first superhero book I read was Flash #112 (I believe that was the issue—anyway the introduction of the Elongated Man) and I was hooked, for life as it turns out. However, Flash did more than draw me into the burgeoning world of the Silver Age, for the letter column hinted at a previous era of super-heroes and issue #123 reintroduced the original Flash. It was mind-boggling. How could I have missed a whole generation of comic characters?

Sometime in the mid-sixties, a fellow San Fernando Valleyite by the name of Fred Romanek had a letter printed in Mystery in Space (which netted the lucky guy all of the original pages from an entire Infantino/Anderson Adam Strange story). My best buddy, Jeff, and I made contact with Fred (who tragically died while in his mid-twenties as the result of a mis-prescription of medication) and Fred showed us Golden Age comics and directed us to Cherokee Book Store.

I missed your editorial in #15 concerning what Jeff and I called the "Burt-cave" (please, please, please send me a copy of that article), but my recollection is being dropped off in a rather, shall we say, adventurous section of Hollywood Blvd. Upon entering a shop filled with musty and rather ancient books (the downstairs book store was the domain of Burt's father and his congenital brother, Gene), we ascended some creaky old stairs to an attic filled with more old books and magazines. Once upstairs, there was an inner room to which you could only gain access with the assistance of Burt.

Burt Blum, in our first journeys to Cherokee, was grouchy and incredulous that anyone wanted access to the inner sanctum or was interested in the old comics he hoarded there. And he always either sat and watched us as we shopped for our latest prizes, or, better yet, locked us in for hours while he went out for lunch or whatever. For Jeff and I, Burt's merchandise was more exciting than finding a hidden pirate treasure.

Golden Age Comics!! A vast assortment of them. EC's (which I resisted—no costumes) also were available in abundance. We became acquainted with all of the companies, titles and characters which had previously been only rumors. The JSA, Captain America (at that time still in Marvel limbo), the Hangman, Plastic Man, Simon & Kirby, Joe Kubert. Those visits to Cherokee were coveted and Jeff and I begged, borrowed and stole to get there. On one occasion, we commandeered a taxi my father had financed for us to see LBJ at UCLA, instructed the cabby to take us to Cherokee and spent the extra cab fare on Burt's bounty (I bought Leading Comics #10).

Jeff and I had a pact—one would never go to Cherokee without the other and one would never buy a book the other had acquired. The result of this was that when Jeff gave up collecting comics for cars and girls, I bought him out and filled in long runs of All-Star, Batman, Adventure, Star Spangled, Fighting American, Two-Fisted Tales, Frontline Combat, etc., about 90% of which were from Burt (the rest probably came to us from Howard Rogofsky, the other source of Golden Age at the time).

Burt was an eccentric. When we first met him he was a conservative grouchy guy. He later became a grouchy "hippy" and those are my last recollections of him. I entered UCLA in the late sixties and didn't have the money for both tuition and pursuing old comics. I never discovered where Burt came up with the comics he stocked.

publishers.

(4) I agree with Pat Calhoun and Bob Ford that Atlas (which published nine Wolverton stories) was slightly better than "not particularly impressive" with regard to quality, especially with steady contributors like those on Bob's list plus others (e.g. Syd Shores, John Buscema, Harry Anderson, Mort Lawrence, Bill Benulis, Pete Tumlinson, Jack Katz, and literally dozens of others.) These artists so far outshone the hacks at Aragon that I become really puzzled as to the criteria being used to judge these comics. I realize this last area is a matter of opinion, not fact, but I think it's important to mention.

Well, that's about all, except to say that I enjoy each issue and would be happy to help you locate some of the old fanzines you indicated you were looking for. Bud Plant and I were around (and publishing) during that Golden Age of Fanzines and would be more than happy to help "old timers" recapture some of those golden moments.

PS. Did anyone ever ask Creig Flessel the questions I raised in my last letter. Was he "L. Meinrad Mayer"?

Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr., California

I'm not sure, but I think Creig just heard your question Jim. Thanks for your always excellent data and insights.

Flesselgram

Again, thanks for making me realize that there really was a 'Golden Age' of comic books. (We) I can't say enough good things about the San Diego Comicon staff, the Marriott hotel, and most of all the welcome given us by the fans on the convention floor.

I think in the future, old bucks like I should be given a warning of the impending deluge of honors which were poured on my balding dome. For example, I was so overwhelmed at the presentation of the ink-pot award, I still don't know what I said in receiving it.

Again thanks, my (our) best to Lisa, and all of our new (old) friends.

Creig & Marie Flessel, New York

The thanks go to you for your historic contribution to comic book history and your willingness to spend time with so many enthusiastic fans (in whose number I count myself). Oh, by the way Creig, Jim Vadeboncoeur is just dying to ask you a question (see letter above).

Everything stops when my issue arrives!

Thank you, thank you, thank you! for the beautiful photo coverage of the San Diego Comic-Con '92! My immediate reaction was, Oh, wow, were THEY there? I missed seeing them! It was so huge this year that I missed seeing so many of my longtime friends.

Many new comic book artists are coming out of it these days, not the least, Scott Benefiel who penciled DC's Superman 1992 Annual #4, "Eclipso, the Darkness Within", "The Eclipsing of Lois Lane". We are all so proud of Scott! He's also developing a side career as an actor and has appeared in a few soap operas.

But getting back to your quick Con report, I think you give the readership of your splendid mag a trip to the con thru your own staff's eyes. I find that most significant and it is good to see the magazine become something for everyone as well as for Golden and Silver Age collectors.

Keep up the great work on CBM. Everything stops here when my issue arrives!

Shel Dorf, California

Look what you started back in 1970 Shel! Can you believe it was 23 years ago?!!! You did good!

Two more price guides

We spoke briefly at the San Diego Con and you asked me to send you information about other price guides. I have included information about two that your readers may not be aware of. They were both printed in 1974 and both sold for $5.

The first one is titled "The S.F.C.A. Price Guide for the Comic Book Collector", published by G.B. Love from Miami. Overall, it is a nice guide, as it includes an artist checklist for Prazetta, Wolverine, Wood and Williamson, and the photos of comic covers are a full page apiece (unfortunately they're in black and white).

The second guide is titled "The Official Guide to Comic Books & Comic Collectibles) by Hal Cohen. Mr. Cohen had previously published guides for antiques and bottles. In his list of acknowledgments and bibliography he lists Robert Overstreet, the Cherokee Book Shop and the afore mentioned S.F.C.A. Price Guide. The prices in the guide are very close to the Overstreet Guide of that year. Cohen's Guide lists only the Fine and the Mint price and there are cover photos about every other page with eight pages of color photos. Prices for Big Little Books are also included.

I hope the info has been helpful to the many CBM readers who are price guide collectors. If you need more information on these guides, please let me know.

Mark Wadge, California

Thanks for sharing the information Mark. Now I can add two more items to my want list! If anyone has data regarding other comic book price guides please give me a ring.

More on Turok

Just a quick letter here to tell you it was a treat to see you at the San Diego Con again in August. Thank you very much for the back issues of CBM.

Received your latest issue of CBM (#18) in the mail today and in reading through the letters column I noticed Alexander Hloderwski's request on information about the Dell/Gold Key cover artists who worked on Turok, Son Of Stone. As Alexander pointed out, both Alberto Gioletti and Adolfo Buiiya worked on interior art for the title. It should be noted that Alberto Gioletti was also the artist who provided the complete interior artwork for Gold Key's Movie Comics adaptation of remake of King Kong that came out in 1968. I believe it was later reprinted by Whitman Publishing.

From what I have been able to find out about him, Alberto Gioletti was from Italy and had moved to the United States some time during the

continued on page 54

late 1950s, strictly to produce comic art for Western Publishing. He actually became one of their more "revered" talents among the other artists who worked for Western during those days, but for reasons unknown, he eventually became frustrated with either the work itself, or the money they were paying back then, and went back to Italy. I have no idea what ever became of him, but I'd like to find out.

As far as the cover artists go on Turok, I don't know who all the artists were, but I do know who the two most famous cover painters were, George Wilson and Morris (Mo) Gollub. I believe these two guys were the most prolific cover artists for Western/Dell/Gold Key/Whitman, through the many years they published.

In my opinion, Morris Gollub was possibly the finest cover artist for Western. And by the way, he did paint that first cover for Turok on FC #596, and many other early ones for Turok, Tarzan, Indian Chief, Champion, Trigger, Lassie, and many others, including Smokey The Bear.

He worked for Western Publishing from about the mid 1940s, up until the early 1970s, and was also considered one of their best artists for doing the "funny animal" interior art for Animal Comics, Santa Claus Funnies, Fairy Tale Parade, etc. I understand he had also worked in animation for a number of years for Hanna-Barbera and died (I believe) in the early 1980s.

I think George Wilson is still around these days although I'm not sure what he's doing now. He was responsible for most of the painted covers on all Gold Key titles when Western parted from Dell in 1962. This included the titles of Tarzan, Turok, Korak, The Phantom, etc. This is the same man who gave us all those great early covers for Magnus Robot Fighter and Space Family Robinson (Lost In Space). What a talent he was! He even did that cover painting for King Kong that I mentioned earlier.

Well, I hope this information is of some help to Mr. Hloderwski, and perhaps to others who, like myself, grew up on, or collect those fabulous old Dell and Gold Key comics. Thanks for putting out CBM, it's a real treat.

Roger Hill, Kansas

Wowzers, do you know your art! I'm sure most readers are aware that Dell and Gold Key material is gaining really intensive collector interest of late. All of you who have been faithful Dell/Gold Key collectors all these many years are about to have your day! You heard it here first!

The old Weisinger Superman

Many thanks for reprinting the first in my series, "Great Moments In Super History." These articles first appeared in Gene Kehoe and Denis McDonough's fine It's A Fanzine during the mid-eighties right after the John Byrne revision of the mythos. So if any of your readers are confused by such statements as "The Byrne era has begun," they should think themselves back in time. Such little anachronisms really shouldn't matter, however, since each article in the series concentrates on a particular story.

Since DC announced that the current incarnation of the Man of Steel would die, I've realized how much this modern version has grown on me. I'm dreading November 19th! And yet, the old Weisinger character will always hold a special place in my heart. That Superman and his saga will always belong to us.

If your readers indicate that they enjoy these nostalgic pieces I'll reply like Jay Leno: "Crunch all you want. We'll make more!"

Gary Robinson, Ohio

Make more, Gary... make more.

A temptation to over grade.

I found Pat Kochanek's article on grading very interesting. I agree with him that..."much of what is sold as NM or VF, is not." The better educated we become the more obvious it seems that most, and I mean almost all, comics published before 1968 are in either Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good or Fine condition.

Unfortunately, all the informed articles in the world will not change the tendency to over-grade. One major change must occur before over-grading can be put to rest. What's that you ask? Well, what is it that the "experienced" collector and the novice have in common? What is it that the "experienced" dealer and the "rookie" dealer have in common? What can make the man-on-the-street a overnight expert? One thing and one thing only, the Overstreet Price Guide.

Here's my point. As long as the Price Guide uses Good, Fine and Near Mint, as its listed grades, there will continue to be a temptation to over grade. It's human nature to try to get the "most bang for the buck", and if a seller can point to a NM price, in black and white, it will usually affect his pricing. (How many times have you seen a Fine book, graded as Fine but priced just a whisker under the Very Fine price? I have seen this a lot, especially on hard to find Golden Age.)

Reality says that 95% of Golden and Silver Age collectors will never own a Very Fine or Near Mint book. So the Price Guide, organized the way it is, is not (in my opinion) as "user friendly" as it could be for the buyer. I think it would be a much better arrangement to change the three listings to Fair, Good, and Fine. The price for a book in Very Fine or better can be negotiated between buyer and seller. (Isn't this the trend anyway?) With prices arranged according to a grade of Fair, Good, or Fine, most collectors will have a guide for the deals they are most often involved in.

Steve Kortus, Minnesota

I have discussed this very topic on many occasions with many of the top collectors and dealers around the country. Although I don't feel the system you suggest is applicable to all eras of certain long running titles, I do feel that there are many many books that it most certainly does apply to. I cannot tell you how many times a week I explain to younger collectors that just because a Near Mint price is listed, it doesn't mean that a NM copy is available (or even exists). Thank you for your thoughtful letter.

The rarest Silver Age DC?

Alan Bahr's letter in CBM #18 regarding DC 100 Page Superspectacular #5 –Love Stories, (what a title!) caused me to recall the efforts I made to get this issue. Although I do not collect romance comics, they do hold a sort of fascination for me in a funky sort of way. Since I had all of the other DC 100 Page Superspectaculars, completist that I am, I decided to fill in that final hole. According to Overstreet, it had the bonus of having Wally Wood inks, and besides, it was cheap and I love a good challenge!

I looked for several years in comic shops across the country and at every convention I attended. I thought maybe it didn't show up at conventions because it was so inexpensive or because it was a

continued on page 56

romance book. So I took to asking dealers at the conventions to check their stock when they got back to the store and call me collect if they had a copy in any condition. I offered ten times Overstreet for a copy. I looked over the CBG every week for someone to advertise a copy for sale. I ran several classified want ads, again offering ten times Overstreet. No response.

I called a large national mail order dealer who I was told had virtually every comic from 1960 up, if I was willing to pay their price. They did not have it! Several other big dealers I called did not have it either. I think most of them thought I was a little off center for paying long distance charges to locate a comic worth two bucks tops.

I began to think maybe DCOPS #5 did not exist. After all, #1-3 did not exist. I heard that the series started with #4 due to some postal regulation. Getting frustrated and desperate, I called the librarian at DC Comics and asked him to look in the archives to see if it really existed. It did and he offered to send me a photocopy of the front cover. I finally had my proof that the darned thing did exist! I enlarged his cover photocopy and posted it at conventions, again offering ten times Overstreet for any copy. Still no response!

More years go by. I was getting obsessed with finding a copy. My friends made fun of me, but they still helped me look for it, knowing that if they ever found a copy they could name their own price for this Holy Grail of Comics.

So how, you may ask, did I ever find my copy? I saw an ad for it in the CBG! It was only $1.50! I naturally called the dealer immediately to reserve it by phone. I held on the phone while I made him physically go get the book and put my name on it. I promised to order more than just that book to make it worth his while.

I sent my order in immediately and when the package finally came, I carefully opened it. I carefully flipped through the other $35 worth of merchandise, holding my breath, waiting for the magical book to appear. It wasn't there! I looked again, faster this time, but it just wasn't there! What the heck is this, anyway?

Then I found the note: "Dear Chris, We held your DC 100 Page Superspectacular #5 - Love Stories, so good that even we can't find it. It's around here somewhere, and we will send it as soon as we find it. We didn't want to hold up the rest of your order."

What "rest of the order?" I could care less about the other stuff! I want my DC 100 Page Superspectacular #5 - Love Stories ! But he was a man of his word and it finally did come — three agonizing weeks later. I now possess a Near Mint copy.

I still look for the book wherever I go, maybe out of habit, or maybe just to confirm what I have been saying for years -- that DC 100 Page Superspectacular #5 - Love Stories is the rarest of all comics since the Silver Age began. I wish Alan Bahr good luck in finding a copy. I hope he doesn't have to spend twelve years looking for it!

Chris Hansen, Florida

The only copy I have ever seen is the one I personally purchased from the newsstand. Thanks for your Superspectacular Saga Chris.

Even More on Turok

Thanks to Gregory Wasko for his well-researched article on Turok. Following in the footsteps of George Olshevsky and Gary Brown, Wasko has managed to add some interesting insights about this remarkable series. Here are a few more.

The majority of the Young Earth episodes I've seen were drawn by Rex Maxon.

Gaylord DuBois wrote a handful of stories and features in the early issues. He was followed by Paul Newman, one of the most prolific writers in the field, who stayed on the series through the final issue.

Among the editors, count Matt Murphy, Paul Kuhn, Joe McGrath, Bill DuBay and...yours truly.

Robin Snyder, Washington

Thanks Robin for the excellent information. I think you'll find our next letter very interesting...

The "unknown" Paul Newman

Naturally, I read Gregory A. Wasko's intriguing article about TUROK in your August issue with amused fascination.

I was amused by the fact that the writer of about 95% of ALL the TUROK stories is still relatively "unknown". Well... I am he.

I wrote my first story for TUROK in No. 8 (Jun 1957) Danger At The Nest (4 pgs) By issue #9, I began writing complete stories, along with Young Earth. In #9, I wrote Fight Of The Fire-makers (14 pgs), The Tree Men (14 pgs), as well as the cover on the horse.

From then on until the final (unpublished issue #133) I wrote all but about 5% of the Turok stories, including the 4 pagers.

Why have I been unknown? Because I have been too busy writing comic books, strips (The Lone Ranger, Smokey The Bear, and three others) and corporate AV shows and live shows to have time to worry if I were known. All that mattered over some 40+ years was that my name was on the check. So obviously, as various people compiled articles on Turok, they had no way of knowing who did what, until #97, July 1975, which finally listed name credits.

The reason Mr. Wasko's article "fascinated" me was his ability to analyze Turok so precisely and let me see a pattern in what I had scripted. It was a very well written article, articulate, precisely observed. To me, the most significant insight related to... "the principal personalities are Native Americans who are portrayed as being culturally and scientifically advanced. The literary position of protagonist for Native Americans is extremely rare."

As the writer of The Lone Ranger comic book and strip, I am frequently questioned about my feelings toward Tonto, the question usually prefaced by an "aren't I politically correct" attitude -- "Isn't Tonto's relationship to The Lone Ranger exploitive and colonial?" I have never felt so. They were equals and acted as equals.

I also wrote "Indian Chief", which was respectfully based on anthropologically correct story assumptions. So it is nice to see my self-proclaimed convictions confirmed.

The full Turok credits will eventually be listed in a bibliography being prepared by Robin Synder, who will soon reveal whether, with over 4,000 stories, I am or am not, "The King of the Comic Book Writers".

P.S. Before his departure from Valiant, Jim Shooter had assigned me to develop a story line for a revival of Turok. At the moment, that project is somewhere up the cliff wall of Lost Valley, in suspension... Yours, still stuck in the Lost Valley...

Paul S. Newman, Maryland

It was a real pleasure to hear from you Paul. I

continued on page 58

wonder if you know how many of us baby boomers avidly read and revered those Turok stories of yours? Can't wait to get a copy of Robin's bibliography too! Pleeeease find a way to do your revival of Turok! Count on me to be first in line at the stands!

Thank you Jim Vadeboncoeur

Just a quick note to thank Jim Vadeboncoeur for his checklist of Kirby Atlas westerns. It's certainly going to make my search for these titles a lot easier. And of course, I agree with his thesis whole heartedly. Just let an article or tid bits of information on a comic be published somewhere, and all of a sudden, there's a run on it.

But what are comic collectors to do? Magazines like CBM are often the only place to exchange information or for collectors to communicate with one another over long distance. I'm afraid that increased prices must be the price paid for airing information in a public forum. I too am not a condition freak and never paid more than fifty dollars for a comic.

I will never understand young fans paying ten dollars for a comic less than a year old when for the same amount, they could've bought a beat up but otherwise complete issue of FF no. 22 (which I recently picked up for two dollars at a local convention) instead.

Pierre Comtois, Massachusetts

I'll give you $3 for it...whaddaya say? Couldn't agree more with "young fan" analysis.

Chutzpah

It's true, Gary, your magazine just keeps getting better and better! Let all the "I'm going to get rich off of New Mutants #87" brood of fandom buy CBG until their little speculator eyes fail. Comic Book Marketplace has captured the heart and soul of what (How shall we say?) mature collectors want... material dealing with the joy of collecting, not necessarily with the business of collecting. Your lettercol and the surprisingly accommodating nature of your articles reflect this. I commend you for having the chutzpah to lead CBM in this direction.

It quickly becomes apparent that there are two classes of comic collectors -the rather well-to-do, and the rest of us. It can be disconcerting to read about how some of us are able to pick up hundred-dollar books with no discernible inconvenience to their wallet. However, it also becomes readily apparent that you strive mightily to ensure that medium-income collectors are not left out in the collecting dark. We are all too painfully aware of rising back-issue prices and the affect magazine articles seem to have on them. I staunchly support reducing, or doing away with altogether, any article overtly or subtlety aimed at rising existing prices. Like Jerry Wyeth who writes that he's amazed you even raise the issue. I too admire the integrity you bring to the magazine (exemplified by the obviously even-handed review of the Grading Guide).

Enough analysis! The two interviews (Rogofsky, Wolverton) were priceless. I doubt there's a single reader over thirty who wasn't aware of Rogofsky's ubiquitous ad in all of their childhood favorites. I was speculating just the other day that the man must be in his eighties! What a treat to find that he such a rich background in comics.

Wolverton has the best sense of humor I've read in ages. Thank you for such a lengthy examination (when was the interview?). I've always enjoyed his work, but had little knowledge of the man. Truly seems to fit his work, doesn't he?

Also liked the new placement of the lettercol - in both the front and the back. Hell, this letter's so long you'll have to run it in both sections! Thank God you changed the format in time.

Lyle S. Tucker, New Mexico

Good to hear from you Lyle, your kind words are much appreciated. Much thought (and self examination) go into content selection for CBM. I hope what we publish will enlighten others just a little, communicate appreciation for comics, and keep the best interests of our hobby foremost. As for the Wolverton interview, I believe it was conducted approximately 1970 (but don't hold me to it). Did you know our subscriber base for your state is quite healthy? There must be a lot of collectors in New Mexico!

Who are the Atlas comics couple?

Sidne and I really enjoy your publication and read it cover to cover every month. Thanks for running that picture of us in the latest issue. It was pretty good. Unfortunately except it seems you lost the card with our names on it. Her name is Sidne Ward (she's the big Legion of Super-Heroes fan). It was nice to see the picture anyway.

Thank you for your consistently high quality publication and I look forward to talking with you soon.

Chris Jackson, California

Sorry about the mixup Chris and Sidne, I lost almost every note I made at the Con. Sheesh. Maybe next year I'll get it right. Anyway it was great to hear from you, and I'm still hoping Sidne will write the definitive Legion article for us. Thanks for writing.

Waiting for Gerdau...

Thank you for producing an excellent magazine. My subscription started two issues ago, and I was so impressed I ordered some back issues. I read them from cover to cover as soon as they arrived. It is nice to find kindred spirits in the hobby.

I have one specific question that has been pestering me for years. I vaguely remember a comic I read as a boy that I would really like to get a hold of again.

As I remember it, the cover depicts a giant monster or alien with long tentacle arms or elastic arms, sitting on buildings in a small town main street, as if on a throne, with a crown on his head. He has established himself as the king or conqueror of the town and is forcing the people to serve him. It was probably a DC anthology comic like House of Secrets, House of Mystery, Tales Of The Unexpected, or My Greatest Adventure and dated somewhere from 1957 to 1961. If you or anyone else can tell me the comic I'm looking for (or, hopefully, have it for sale - any condition) I would be very grateful.

Once again, thank you, and be assured that just as the Comic Book Marketplace has renewed my interest and joy in the hobby, your kind support has renewed my interest in writing. I hope I can produce something of interest in the future.

Rolf Gerdau, Nebraska

Thanks for your excellent article (published in this issue). I believe the comic that's been pestering you is My Greatest Adventure #43, May 1960. The cover story is entitled "We Were Ruled By The Emperor-Beast!". I also read the

continued on page 61

continued from page 58

book as a boy and the three eyed, tentacle armed purple monster on the cover is rather compelling and could certainly make an impression on a young lad. It affected me that way, so much so, that I knew the book you were talking about immediately upon reading your description.

A big hello from down under, mate!

CBM just continues to amaze, improve and excel. Issues #16 and #17 were great reads and those covers… gasp… sqrk… let me catch my breath! I loved Lee Hester's satirical pieces especially the convention send-up. They provide for me, someone who has never been to a convention because Perth is too small to have one (for now!), a great insight into what sort of things can go on in them.

Just a few requests Gary! Hope to see that promised article by Dr. Pat Kochanek on the White Mountain collection. How's about getting "ole Doc Contarino" to write again? An article on the Western, PA collection he discovered would be great.

While we're on the 'ole Doc', how's about bringing back the CBM spotlight - starting with the Doc?, then Steve Fishler? Also, how's about more on Jack Kirby, especially his early days? Finally what's happened to Erik Andresen's side splitting cartoons??

Well, I have to feed the pet Koala with some old pages from some old comic books (it refuses to eat eucalyptus leaves ever since I let it try some Kirby Thor reprints from Marvel Spectacular)!!

Ben Teoh, Australia

A big hello from up over. Keith (ole Doc) Contarino just called the other day and my hope is, now that his house facelift is complete, he'll write a few things for us. Steve Fishler says his bio info is almost complete so it won't be long before we print his Spotlight. And Pat Kochanek is working on the White Mountain article as well. I've mailed a large case of "Koala Bismo" and some Koala self help tapes. I think your pet may need them. Nice to hear from the Australian AACBC representative

Crunching to find out!!

I got a few laffs out of the "Convention due & dunce…" feature by Lee. Let me say, he's one of the fairest graders in the biz these days, and I hope loyalty and due respect will drive collectors to sell their comics (at best for a bit less money) to him. Honesty pays!! Crime does not! Hey, the best exercise I get is taking the tape off those propylene bags. Uhhhggghh!

Oh, where's the rest of the summary list of Batman appearances on cereal boxes? You only listed one! Please follow up, I'm crunching to find out!!

Ken Kaffke, California

The list got a little soggy in milk but we are drying it off for a future issue.

Crime into Horror.

I love your magazine. The moment I saw it on the newsstand, I knew this is what I had been looking for. I only wish I had discovered it sooner, this was issue #17, but what an issue to start with. I read it from cover to cover, then started over again, I called right then for my subscription. The guide to pre-code Horror comics was great! Now, how about an article on the crime comics of the 1940s and early 50s? I have recently come across some nice issues, and I find it interesting that a number of crime titles from the late 40s suddenly changed to horror titles around 1950. For instance, "Crime Patrol" became "Crypt Of Terror" and "War Against Crime" became "Vault Of Horror". I would like to hear about how and why some of these changes took place. I look forward to each and every issue to come, keep up the good work!

Roger Taylor, West Virginia

We've got an article in the works right now that includes some discussion of the crime to horror change-over. Thanks Roger for your enthusiastic support of CBM and to everyone who sent letters this month. We would love to here from you! If you'd care to write to us, send your comments and suggestions to:

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE
PO BOX 180900, CORONADO, CA 92178
OR FAX US AT: (619) 435-6738

CBM Back Issues are still available...but act quickly!

Sorry, #1, 2, 3, 5 & 11-13 are Sold Out!

#4 Centaur Comics
#6 Special Restoration Issue
#7 The Amazing Bethlehem Collection
#8 Comic Character Memorabilia
#9 Lou Fine; The Spider-Man Soaps
#10 Seduction of the Innocent
#14 Brave & The Bold Special; Stan Lee
#15 Greg Flessel; DC Sci-Fi; 70's #1s
#16 Fantastic Four, Turok, Bill Gaines
#17 Bat-Man Special, Pre-Code Horrors
#18 Basil Wolverton; Superman; 1st Dealer

All Back Issues are $5 each
Please include $2 postage & handling
MC/VISA orders: (619) 435-6645

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE
BACK ISSUES
P.O. BOX 180900
Coronado • CA • 92178-0900

The *FIRST* Action Comics #1!

Move over Man of Steel. Of course, the image of Superman lifting a car overhead comes to mind when one thinks of the cover to the first issue of Action Comics. However, the actual first issue of Action Comics featured a decidedly different look. The cover to the original Action Comics No. 1 pictured a hooded ghoul staring straight into the reader's eyes, a dripping knife held aloft, under the familiar logo to Action Comics.

DC Publications was able to secure the copyright to the name Action Comics in 1937 by virtue of creating a 4-page legal prototype comic book. There was no mention of Superman in this issue. The original Action No. 1, of which three copies were known to be published, featured a cover drawn by Creig Flessel and interior material that was culled from the pages of the first issue of Detective Comics. Creig's drawing, with an image befitting the horror comics of the 1950s, was actually intended to be the cover for Detective Comics No. 2. However, this image was initially felt to be too horrific by the editors of DC, and Creig's drawing was put on the shelf. It was not shelved for long, as the need to secure the copyright to a new title necessitated the rapid paste-up and assemblage of a legal document called an "Ashcan" comic. Flessel's art was utilized along with a 4-page Speed Saunders story by Fred Guardineer and, ironically, a 4-page Slam Bradley story by Superman's creators, Jerome Siegel and Joe Shuster. No art or ads were featured on either the interior covers or back cover.

As it turned out, Creig Flessel was never informed that his artwork was used to secure the title to Action Comics. I spoke with Creig at the 1992 San Diego Comics Convention, and he was genuinely surprised to see his drawing under the Action Comics logo. He immediately recalled the artwork's rejection for Detective Comics as "being just too much for them at the time." After 55 years, it was an interesting reunion of a man and his artwork. Creig seemed pleased to find out that his artwork had graced the actual first issue of the comic title that was to introduce Superman to the world and forever alter the course of comic book history.

Editors Note: All three copies of the prototype Action Comics No. 1 are still in existence. Two copies were originally in the collection of DC's former production manager Sol Harrison. One of these copies is now in the collection of the author of this article. The other copy is in the Ashcan collection of Gary Colabuono. The third copy has never left the archive files of DC. ■

by Dr. Mark N. Miller

Every few months he would disclose what Jeff and I called a "new shipment"– stacks of previously unseen wonders – we would spend to our limits. And Burt always ridiculed our collecting passion. I bought a well-read copy of All-Star #3 from Burt for $15, and he chided me, "If I had that kind of money for a comic book I'd go to Vegas". I think Burt came to like us, but I was never quite sure. I liked him, although I was always a bit nervous around him in my early youth, and my trips to his hideout are some of my fondest memories. Where are you, Burt? I'd like to say thanks.

I notice you mention you were born in 1949. Well, I was born in 1950. We quite possibly passed on this creaky stairs to the Burt-cave, but I would have regarded you (or Gerard Voland) as a rival, a possible threat to my obtaining that one book I was looking for that week.

I picked up issue #15 gratis at the San Diego Con. My subscription will be forthcoming in a separate envelope. Thanks for awakening nearly forgotten, but very happy, memories.

Bruce Lowry, California

Thank you Bruce, for exactly describing my memories and feelings about Cherokee Book Store. Back in the early sixties, most of us on the west coast found Cherokee to be the central place to make contact with other GA/SA collectors. I met my long time friend and serious collector Chuck McCleary (and his late friend Rick Durell) at Cherokee. Chuck and I still see each other at Southern California cons and never fail to reminisce about Burt and Gene and their Dad. Chuck and Rick were those rare adults who treated us "youngsters" respectfully in spite of our young age and semi-respectful behavior

I met a very young Billy Mumy at Cherokee, just after seeing him "wish someone to the cornfield" on the Twilight Zone. I was amazed when Billy confided in Pat Calhoun, my brother Lane, and myself that, he too, was on a limited budget and had to select his old comics very carefully, in spite of his child star status.

Burt was the first to explain to us about the rarity of DC's rarest Golden Age anthology title, More Fun. I vividly recall many multiple copies of Action 3-100, Detective 30-100, and even Adventure 42nb-100… all priced at around $3 each, but Burt's precious and comparatively "tiny" stack of five or ten large logo More Funs was priced all the way up to an incredible $25-40 each, just to ensure none would leave the loft in the possession of the "terrible Trio from San Diego".

But enough nostalgia Bruce, I've got some great news. Some avid LA collectors were kind enough to call and inform me that they have located the inimitable Bert Blum. Not only that, but he has tentatively agreed to do an interview which will be published in a forthcoming issue of CBM. I myself can hardly wait! So until then, see you at the "Burt-Cave" and thanks for your great letter.

Vin Sullivan did the cover of Detective #1

I very much enjoyed the Creig Flessel issue of CBM, especially the interview by Charlie Roberts.

One slight correction: Mr. Flessel did seven Sandman covers for Adventure Comics, not six. #60 was omitted which was the last cover appearance of the original Sandman and Flessel's last Sandman cover as well.

I'm happy to see that another almost forgotten Golden Age great is finally getting the recognition he deserves. My compliments to you and Charlie.

Creig Flessel did not draw the cover of Detective #1. Detective #2 was his first cover, and he did virtually all of the covers from #2 through #18. Vince Sullivan did the Detective #1 cover."

William Tighe, Pennsylvania

Your cover information is correct. I didn't intend to suggest that the cover of Detective #1 was by Flessel (although this has been a area of fandom confusion for years). I was attempting to suggest (admittedly not very clearly) that Detective #1 contained Creig's first published work. Flessel fans please note Creig's embarrassingly accurate caricature of yours truly next to the Letter From The Editor in this issue. Charlie Roberts and David Siegel deserve credit for the generous contribution of time and energy on the project. Thanks to you, William, and the dozens of other Flessel/Sandman fans who wrote in with praise for the issue.

Miscellaneous musings from Jon Berk

Latest CBM looks great! I really enjoyed the Wolverton material - particularly the list of comics.

In answer to your FF #2 survey - I have one - "should VF" (uh-oh! 84/9). In that vein, if 54% of Silver Age/Golden Age collectors subscribe to CBM - what/how do you calculate the total number?

On the Marvel coin inquiry - I had a Spider-Man coin but lost it sometime during my move from Boston to Connecticut in 1975 (anyone seen it?) They were quite nice.

I don't know how many spoke to Mr./Mrs. Flessel at San Diego, but what a nice pair. I spoke to Mrs. Flessel yesterday and she still can't get over that such "young people" are interested in the vintage Flessel comic art. She also was surprised to find that we all were so "normal"; she even said "she'd be proud to have any of us as grandchildren".

Tid-bit: strike the question mark in the Price Guide and the notation in the Photo-Journal. Creig Flessel did not do the Detective Comic #1 cover - Vincent Sullivan did (I asked)

I just received the Sotheby's auction catalogue. Thanks are due you and the AACBC grading committee for donating your time. …Committee participation enhances and benefits the auction house, its consignors, and the bidders plus lends credibility and stature to the event. Beside looking at the auction items, I focused on the grading. It was interesting to note how many books had grading variances between the committee average and the consultant (that, of course, does not include the grading variation amongst the committee members). Since grading is becoming all the more critical as the hobby grows and matures, where are we when such variation can exist among the acknowledged experts of the hobby (is one man's floor, another man's ceiling?)? While the efforts, emphasis, and progress that has been made to make grading

continued on page 50

The Wonders of Wonder Comics

After World War II interest in superheroes was waning so Better Publications made some changes in their four anthology titles. Costumed crime-fighters surrendered their cover slots to jungle gals and interplanetary adventurers, and some of the second- string heroes were replaced by jive-talking teenagers. In *Wonder Comics*, Axis-crushing cover star, the Grim Reaper, moved aside for Wonderman. We weren't told (not here anyway) how this good guy of tomorrow came to be, or how he could fly, but instead launched immediately into Wonderman's cosmic battle against Dr. Voodoo. No explanation was necessary- this is the kind of pseudoscientific mumbo-jumbo where the preposterousness of it all is a good part of the fun. Better's premier cover artist, Alex Schomburg, well captures this spirit with his rendering of Voodoo's reptilian minions attempting to make off with Wonderman's woman.

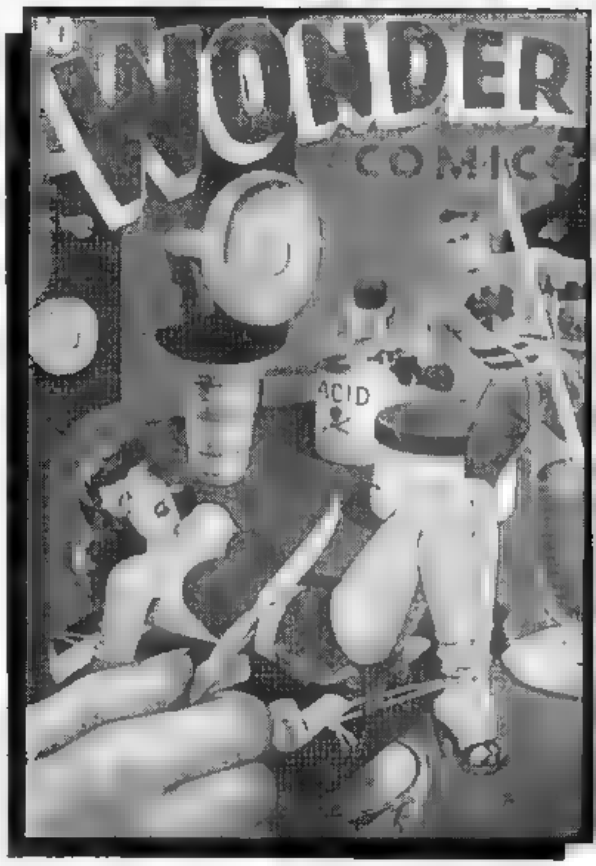
The Grim Reaper story in this issue #9 (Dec 1946) gets more down to earth with a genuine post-war problem. This hero, just in from overseas, can't find a place to rent. Fortunately he bumps into some bad guys, and after thwarting their schemes and sending them to jail, he moves into their apartment.

Also around is "Jill Trent, Science Sleuth", who must clean things up after her super-magnifying glasses fall into criminal hands.

Wrapping up this ish is "Bart Bradley", college athlete and cub reporter, who cracks the case of a crooked doctor and whacks the winning hit in the school's big baseball game.

By issue #15 (Dec 1947) *Wonder* was on its way to becoming a full-fledged fantasy mag. "Tara", the pirate queen, made her first appearance. After her father's spaceship is hijacked by Martian marauders and the old man is slain, she fights her way to freedom and eventually captures the Martian leader. But when brought to trial he gets off with diplomatic immunity. His death during a scrap with Tara's friends forces them to become outlaws. Tara was the cover attraction for the last five issues- providing the female element intrinsic to Schomburg's space scenes. Also in this ish: Wonderman's fight with Dr. Voodoo continues, the Reaper recounts one of his war exploits, and Jill Trent solves some sky crimes with a little help from her radioactive homing pigeons. But top honors go to Schomburg's "under the microscope" airbrush cover, the finest feature of the book.

Wonder #20 (Oct 1948) is the final issue of this title, and they definitely went out with a bang. "Xela" starts things off with another awesome airbrush cover showing Tara in a tight spot. Her story is pretty good, but Wonderman is outstanding. This one goes beyond space opera as Wonderman's robot assistant gets a lesson in loyalty and humanity. Then, a newcomer, the Silver Knight, puts in a rousing 13-page epic, masterfully illustrated by fan favorite, Frank Frazetta.



WONDER #15 (Dec 1947): Among the many elements that make up this superb cover is the elegant simplicity of presentation. Note that the only two words on the cover are "Wonder Comics". Not only that but Xela is the perfect nom de zoom. ©BETTER PUBS.

WONDER #20 (Oct 1948): Even though the issue is a gem from cover to cover it marks the end of the line for the title. Four-color fantasy would eventually have its day, but in 1948 the genre was not yet popular enough to survive. ©BETTER PUBS.

Werebeasts, magic armor, the "Deathless Druid": this is high-octane fantasy. Jill Trent makes some "magic armor" too, from cloth that becomes indestructible after exposure to radiation. But the costume she makes from it gets stolen, and the "bullet-proof bandit" seems unstoppable until Jill catches up with him. Then, beaming more radiation onto the suit, she cooks the crook.

The cover of WONDER #9 (Dec 1946) is clearly superhero, albeit a bit more exotic. On the later covers the heroic aspects become subordinate to sci-fi elements: hence the case for these as precursors to "fifties fantasy". ©BETTER PUBS.

Although Better phased out most of their titles around this time, they would soon, under the Standard imprint, be churning out romance and horror, and chronicling the misadventures of Dennis the Menace.

But the post-war issues of *Exciting, Thrilling, Startling,* and *Wonder* exert a certain fascination, with the Schomburg airbrush covers getting my vote for best ever from any company. Better was also the publisher of two long-running SF pulps: "Startling Stories" and "Thrilling Wonder Stories", which lent their mood as well as their names to the comic books, in much the same way that Fiction House's *Planet Comics* was inspired by their gosh-wow space pulp, "Planet Stories".

Though not much is made of the late forties in comic book history, quantitatively, the period saw a lot of books produced. And the disinterest in superheroes reflects a maturation of the audience. Also, speaking as one who regards pre-code fantasy comics as the greatest comics of all time, the three issues of *Wonder* discussed here anticipate a trend that would blossom in the early 1950s. In fact this last issue of *Wonder* is contemporary to the first issue of ACG's trail-blazing title, *Adventures Into The Unknown*. Which gets credit as the first horror series in comic history. *Wonder Comics* should also get some credit as a pioneering title and as a just plain "wonder"ful comic! ■

COMING NEXT MONTH IN CBM

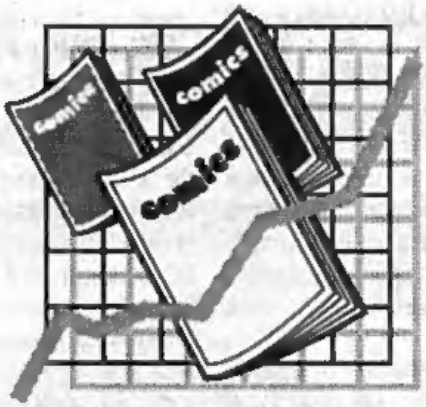
The Funtastic World of Hanna Barbera Comics

plus **The Unknown Batman & Robin Title...**

Star Spangled Comics

Rob & Tim's 'Excellent'

Market Report



by Rob Hughes & Tim Riley

Greetings and salutations fellow Marketeers from sunny Southern California. Well, that monster of a convention they hold in San Diego every year is again, but a memory. It was a mixed bag of everything you can imagine, from the quarter boxes neatly tucked under the tables to the rare high grade GA/SA material we all covet but few can afford. I still feel that the average collector was hard pressed to find a lot of "great deals" one might have expected from the row upon row of GA comics. Now on to the national comic book marketplace.

Post Silver Age: 1970s books continue to be a hot ticket for collectors everywhere. I suggest you seek out and obtain the higher priced keys now because two years down the road you may see prices up and outta' sight.

Marvel '70s still lead the way with demand high and supplies on pristine keys surprisingly low. Here are some solid investments: *Tomb of Dracula* #1 NM/M is in such demand that I have trouble keeping high grades in stock. *Werewolf By Night* #1 & 32 are moving up rapidly. *X-Men* #94 and *Giant Size* #1 are "can't lose" investments. *Hulk* #181 has resurfaced and pristine copies are moving well. *Amazing Spider-Man* #101 & 102 are very "hot" for want of a better word. Mint copies of *Marvel Spotlight* #5 are also selling well.

DC '70s have also entered the spotlight of collector interest with Neal Adam's books in the lead. His books are all starting to rise in price but are still inexpensive enough for most everyone, at least for the time being. *Green Lantern* #76 is still "the" book and is hard to find in top grade. *All Star Western* #10 & 11 continue to be in demand as well. *House of Secrets* #92 remains the number one high demand book but good luck on finding a high grade copy. *HOS* #92 is selling extremely well clear down to VG.

Silver Age: The Spider-Man Movie is on the way so watch for the usual rise in demand and price associated with a film release! My contacts tell me that Dealer supplies of Ditko Spidey classics all over the country are at an all time low (especially in fine or better) and when the movie is released there will be pitifully few copies to be had and those will only be available at inflated prices. If you're trying to fill holes in your Spidey run (and your budget permits), the smart collector will concentrate on #s 1-100 Ditko and Romita issues first.

After I mentioned *Tales To Astonish* #27 in a previous Market Report, I got calls from a couple of collectors looking only for VF/NM or better copies. Pandom, wake up and smell the foxing! *TTA* #27 (along with most all pre hero Marvel) is next to impossible to locate above Fine. As seasoned collectors discover this, demand for mid grade copies will soar. All other Marvel Silver keys are selling but only in the highest grades. This is also unfortunate because there are plenty of lower grades out there to enjoy and collect (heck, what's the matter with a solid Fine!).

DC books have finally started to stabilize, at least a little, yet collectors nationwide are still trying (in vain) to find those few remaining high grades. One of the real high demand books right now is *Showcase* #22, with NM white page copies commanding $3000 plus (YIKES!) and going up all the time. As *Showcase* #4 and #8 go out of sight, #23 can do nothing but follow! *Showcase* runs have settled down a bit but it's still the 'Rolls Royce' of Silver Age runs. *Brave and Bold* #s 1-33 are as popular as ever and Viking Prince numbers are sizzling with their wonderful Kubert covers. DC's second string key books are also heavily in demand and are still quite affordable. Collector awareness of them as historically important books in their own right has radically increased demand.

"Fin Fang Foom is about to ZOOM!"

Here are some solid investments that will come as no surprise: *Hawkman* #1 (super hot), *Aquaman* #1, *Sea Devils* #1, *Metal Men* #1, and *Rip Hunter* #1 very happnin', *Atom* #1 burning in VF/NM as triple guide book! This is most likely the fallout of *Showcase* #34 being in such demand. Looks like DC Silver, in general, is still at the controls when it comes to market domination.

Whoa Nellie! Gold Key Star Treks are "definitely not dead Jim"! Pristine copies are going at

triple Guide, and are still a very solid investment. Gold Key Star Trek still has a lot of potential for growth, and don't let anybody tell you different! *Doctor Solar* #1 is in huge demand and so is *Magnus Robot Fighter* #1. Dell Western titles are on the comeback trail, especially movie and TV tie-ins. I get a lot of requests for *Bonanza* #1 in top grade.

Ditko Charlton titles (such as *Captain Atom, Mysterious Traveler, Space Adventures* etc.) are all on a major upswing and are highly recommended. CBM is planning the most incredible tribute to Ditko in issue #23 and when collectors get the lowdown on the '50s and early '60s work of one of the greatest artists of all time, you can bet you won't be able to find copies if your ever lovin' life depended on it!

Pre-Silver Age: The big six Marvel pre hero titles (namely *Strange Tales, Journey Into Mystery, Strange Worlds, Tales Of Suspense, Tales To Astonish,* and *Amazing Adventures* remain in the spotlight and are in extremely high demand in all grades far surpassing dealer supplies. *Strange Tales* #89 (first Fin Fang Foom) is still an undiscovered treasure and, if you can find one, is going at way over guide. I don't know of any even partially breathing person who would let a VG copy go for less than $45 right now. This book is hard to find and Fine copies will easily achieve the $150 mark in the future. Fin Fang Foom is about to ZOOM!

'50s horror books are, as always, a bargain. Even E.C.'s are comparatively cheap. Heck, *Tales From The Crypt* #20 (#1 in reality) is still under $1000 in VF/NM. How can this be? People are just thinking about where the recent horror craze will eventually go (price wise). But just you wait Henry Higgins... there's going to be a rush on these comics when many more collectors finally get the horror bug. A wise and prudent investment says I!

Golden Age: I wish there were some new trend to report here but things have pretty much remained the same. DC and Timely blah, blah, blah... looking for high grade unrestored copies? Good Luck! My suggestion is stay with the lower priced end of these runs where restoration is the least likely. To get high grade unrestored copies of the more expensive books you're going to need lots of disposable cash and a bidding paddle at both Sotheby's and Christie's. The shopping trend from now on out will likely be the big auction houses almost exclusively. All the rest of us middle class types are going to have to settle for G/VG copies, which, when you think of it, isn't all that bad. Gotta' go now so best wishes to all you comiholics. —***Tim Riley***

I was just informed the other day that DC Comics is planning to kill off Superman, the most significant, famous, and world renown superhero in all of comic book history! I'll tell you folks, Rob is not pleased at all with this idea (marketing ploy or not) and can only assume somebody at DC has not really thought this out. It sure is going to be a dark day in all comicdom when and if it happens, and that's not taking into account the possible long term implications for DC prices. Consider the parallel situation with Fawcett Capt. Marvel. Continuity and uninterrupted longevity are an essential component of and have a direct correlation to price stability. But enough of Economics 101.

On another note, the San Diego Comic Con was a tremendous success (as usual), with attendance reaching its pinnacle on Saturday, August 15, at a record 21,000! And boy was it hot, both outside and in. So many books and so little time. If attendance at the con was any indication of the popularity of our hobby, the future of the market looks very bright! Now onto a few undervalued gems.

***Adventure Comics* #431-#440** (1974-1975): This ten issue run resurrects the Spectre for the 3rd time since his inception in the February 1940 issue of *More Fun Comics*. In my opinion *Adventure Comics* #431-#440 contain the purest and most distinctive interpretation of this wonderful character ever done. This is The Astral Avenger at his very finest and with the superb writing of Michael Fleisher and detailed drawing of Jim Aparo, the ten issue collection truly captures the true essence of The Ghostly Guardian. But the most incredible discovery is the price! They presently list in the *Overstreet Update* for (gulp!) a buck apiece!

***Savage Tales* #1** (5/71): Origin and 1st appearance of The Man-Thing written by Gerry Conway and illustrated by the great Gray Morrow. "The Coming of The Man-Thing" preceded DC's Swamp Thing by two months and logically should be guiding at more than its present 50% of the value of the 1st Swamp Thing in House Of Secrets #92. Along with the Stan Lee/John Romita Sr. contribution, this magazine also contains incredible Barry Smith Conan. Find a copy before "O'l fork-face" begins to pick up steam like his DC counterpart. And with the resurgence of popularity that Conan of late, the book will likely get a well deserved increase in value.

***Tomb of Dracula* #1** (4/72): With its masterful Gene Colan art, this book is in high demand and increasing in value every time the Update comes out. Another early '70s book that is growing in collector interest, it is starting to soar up, up, and away. Currently at $40 in NM (Overstreet) but will not likely stay there long. I have many requests for this issue in strict VF/NM or better, including requests from the overseas market. Great investment in high grade.

***Fear (Adventures Into...)* #20:** Morbius, The Living Vampire series begins. Marvel's second most famous vampire is gaining a strong following and this book still guides at only $5 in NM. Look for a rapid rise in price in the near future. Recent reported sales have been as high as $20; that's 4x Guide or more for this '70s book! And, with his 1st app. and origin in *Amazing Spider-Man* #101 and #102 reaching $75+ and $65+ respectively, collectors might want to look a little harder for this one.

***Fantastic Four* #52 & #53** (7-8/66): 1st app. and origin of The Black Panther. Featuring one of the 1st black superheroes both *FF* #52 and #53 are dark covers that easily show defects. Every tiny crease, ding, nick, and tear shows up like a spotlight, making pristine copies difficult to find. Difficult to locate VF/NM copies have a lot of room to grow from their present $45 and $40 values.

***Our Army At War* #151:** 1st app. of The Enemy Ace by Joe Kubert. With the popular explosion of all DC Silver Age war titles recently, this issue has tremendous potential at $60 in NM. Good luck, however, locating a copy in high grade. Also keep an eagle eye on the Ace's tryout series in Showcase #57 and #58. Issue #57 is a black cover and both are tough in VF or better. At $40 apiece these masterfully drawn Kubert gems are well worth the search.

Well that's it for this issue of the Excellent market report. We'll be back in Issue #21 with more suggestions, so, until then, both Tim and I wish you happy collecting. —***Rob Hughes*** ■

Tim Riley is manager of WALL TO WALL Comics in Torrence, Calif.
Rob Hughes is owner of ARCHANGEL COMICS in San Diego, Calif.

"THE HAMMER OF HELL"

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

With The ENEMY ACE

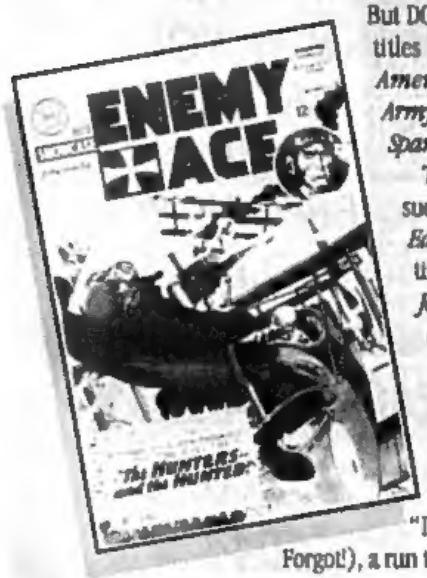
A Series Retrospective by Guy Budziak

When it comes to Silver Age war comics, many collectors place one company head and shoulders above the others in both quantity and quality.

Marvel (to the best of my knowledge) had only two titles to their credit; the short-lived *Capt. Savage And His Leatherneck Raiders* (1968-70) and the more successful *Sgt. Fury And His Howling Commandos* (1963-81). But DC, on the other hand, had no less than five titles going strong from the early 1950s: *All American Men of War, G.I. Combat, Our Army At War, Our Fighting Forces,* and *Star Spangled War Stories.*

The first four of these great titles featured such prominent mainstays as *Sgt. Rock and Easy Company, Gunner and Sarge* (sometimes with and sometimes without Pooch), *Jeb Stuart and his Haunted Tank, Johnny Cloud the Navajo Ace,* and *Steve Savage the Balloon Buster*. But the fifth title, *Star Spangled War Stories* (*SSWS*), proved to be the most idiosyncratic.

In 1960, SSWS began the now famous and avidly collected series of "Dinosaur Issues" (The War That Time Forgot!), a run that would continue until 1968. Most of the time it featured beautifully rendered prehistoric reptiles pitted against the American military. It's no secret that these are currently considered the hottest of the Silver Age war comics, with prices ranging from $45-$150 apiece for Near Mint copies (as listed in the most recent *Overstreet Price Update*). But all good dinosaurs must eventually face extinction, and with *SSWS* #138 a new series took over the title. Interestingly, its setting of this new series was not the Second World War as was the custom, but the First. And even more amazing, it focused not on the "good guys" but the enemy, specifically, Enemy Ace.



SHOWCASE #58, The Enemy Ace broke all the rules. ©DC

Enemy Ace first appeared on the scene in *Our Army At War* #151(Feb. 1965), as a backup feature to Sgt. Rock. Enemy Ace was co-featured on the cover only symbolically, as a flaming question mark set against a black background. Above it were the words, "Who is the blazing ENEMY we dared not show on the cover?" Who indeed. When first introduced in this superb issue, Rittmeister Hans Von Hammer has just downed a French flyer, inwardly acknowledging the gallantry of his vanquished opponent even as the brave Frenchman plummets to his death.

Although it is Von Hammer's 50th victory, for him there is no cause for celebration. Even though Enemy Ace is a skillful combat flyer, he takes neither pride nor pleasure in the efficiency with which he dispatches his numerous foes. Baron Von Hammer is portrayed from the outset as a man of conscience; a